ABOUT THE BOOK

The book **'Women Empowerment in India and Beyond'** is a compound scripture, based on the research papers, contributed by a galaxy of wise academicians, enthusiastic scholars and energetic and endeavoring students of Social Sciences all over India. This book delineates a prominent and practical picture of Women empowerment in India and abroad. This book cultivates all the areas of women's empowerment and gives a new vista regarding the position of women all over the world. This book further gives us a practical picture of women enjoying equal rights with male people in social, cultural, educational, religious, political and literary spheres and even in the sphere of economy. The book also throws light on how women have been enjoying enormous privileges in the field of games and sports. The book thus gives us clear picture of women that the women have at present been really empowered throughout the world.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Dr. Bimalendu Ghosh (M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.), an Associate Professor, currently teaches in the Department of Political Science (Head), Kanchrapara College, West Bengal, India. He is also teaching as a Guest Faculty in the P.G. Department of Political Science at Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata. He had worked as an Academic Counsellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). He had worked as an Assistant Teacher of Betna High School (H.S.). He is also the co-editor of a number of books- ***India in the First Two Decades of the 21st Century: Society, Polity and Covid-19; Indian Foreign Policy and World Order: New Dimensions and Direction; South Asia and Covid-19: Challenges and Way Out; Democracy and Governance in the 21st Century: India and the World, Populist Discourse and Democracy in India: Emerging Issues & Trends; Intellectual Property Rights: A Sophisticated Way to Education Sector Reform***. He published a number of articles and research papers in various well reputed Journals and edited Books. He had presented more than 55 Research Articles at different National and International Seminars and Webinars. His research interests include Central Asia, Regional Organizations and International Relations.

Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar (M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.) is presently working as an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, Kanchrapara College, Kanchrapara, and District- 24 Parganas (North). He has been teaching Political Science for 42 years in both Government Colleges and Government sponsored Colleges in West Bengal. He has more than 90 Books of his own in Political Science, History,Political Sociology, Political Philosophy, Feminism, Environmentalism, and Rabindranath Tagore and so on. He has contributed more than 250 Articles / Papers on Society, Polity, Culture, Economy, Religion, Feminism, Environmentalism, Literature and so on in different Academic and Literary Journals and Magazines with ISSN and also more than 50 Chapters in different Books with ISBN. He has also edited several books on topics such as Feminism, Covid-19, Tribal Affairs, and Indian Political Thought etc. He has been working as a regular Judge in "Monthly Lok Adalat" at District Magistrate Court at Ranaghat. He has also participated in more than 150 International and National Seminars, Webinars, Conferences and Workshops as Invited Speaker, Guest Speaker, Chair Person, Session Chair, and Motivational Speaker and so on.

Dr Bhaswati Chakrabortty (M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.) is presently working as an associate professor of political science at Kanchrapara College, North - 24 Parganas, West Bengal. She has done her Ph.D. in political Science from Kalyani University, Nadia, West Bengal. She has participated and presented papers in various State, National and International level seminar, conference and workshop.She also published many research articles in National and International journal and edited books.

₹1995/-

KUNAL BOOKS
(Publisher & Distributors)
4648/21, First Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj
New Delhi-110 002 (India)
Ph.: 011-23275069, Mob.: 9811043697, 9868071411
E-mail: kunalbooks@gmail.com
Website: www.kunalbooks.com

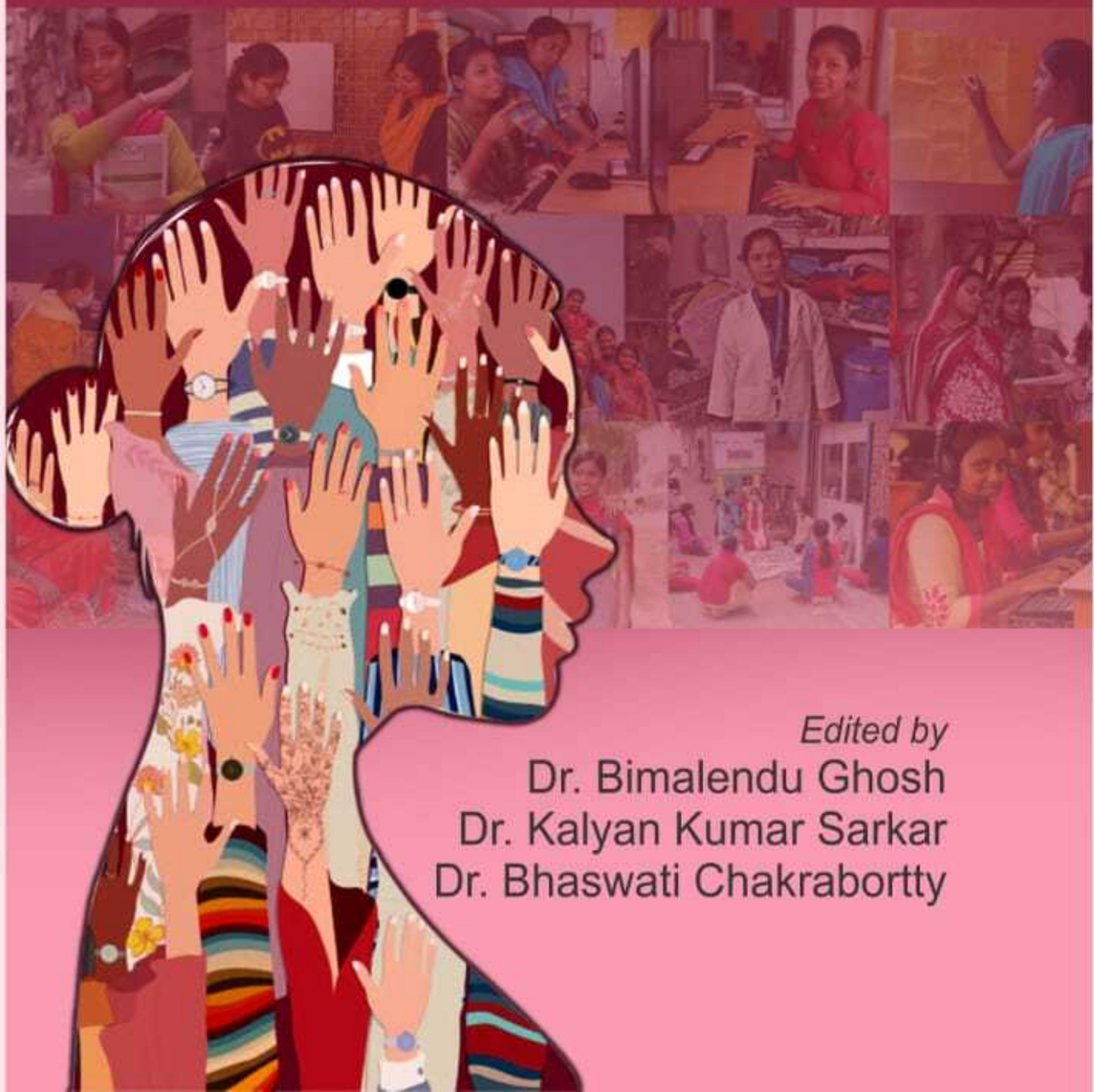
ISBN 978-93-6389-259-0

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA AND BEYOND

Edited by
Dr. Bimalendu Ghosh
Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar
Dr. Bhaswati Chakrabortty

KUNAL

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA AND BEYOND



Edited by
Dr. Bimalendu Ghosh
Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar
Dr. Bhaswati Chakrabortty

Women Empowerment in India and Beyond

Women Empowerment in India and Beyond

Editors:
Dr. Bimalendu Ghosh
Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar
Dr. Bhawati Chakrabortty

KUNAL BOOKS
New Delhi - 110002 (India)

KUNAL BOOKS
4648/21, 1st Floor, Ansari Road,
Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002.
Phones: 011-23275069, 9811043697
E-mail: *kunalbooks@gmail.com*
Website: *www.kunalbooks.com*

Women Empowerment in India and Beyond

© Editors
First Published, 2025
ISBN:

[All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher].

The opinions and views expressed are exclusively those of the authors/ contributors and in no way the editor or publisher is responsible

---

Published in India by **Prem Singh Bisht of Kunal Books** and printed at Global Printing Services, New Delhi-110092.

FOREWORD

It is rather romantic to introduce the wife to some friend in such words as “She is my better half”. In reality, she is seldom treated as equal. Of course there are some exceptions, some people who really regard women as the half sky. Male chauvinism compels the menfolk in general to cherish a male prejudice against women, to believe that men are superior to women in terms of ability, intelligence, etc. But such a myth has been shattered, especially, during the last 150 years. Champions of Women’s Emancipation and activists of Women’s Empowerment have upheld the facts about women in the true light and myriads of women have proved in almost every sphere of life that they are not inferior to their opposite sex , that they are equal, and in some fields, even superior to men. In some ancient societies, too, they proved to be not of lesser quality, or importance, value or merit.

Since about the middle of the nineteenth century, there have been a lot of radical thinkers in our country who felt worried about discrimination against women. They included Raja Rammohan Roy (special reference to Abolition of the Sutee) Begum Rokeya, Vidyasagar(special reference to women’s education, establishment of girls’ schools, widow remarriage etc.) Ramkrishna Paramhansa (special reference to even worshipping his wife, Ma Sarada), Vivekananda, Sarala Ray, Kadambini Ganguly, Sri Aurobindo (special reference to ‘Women’s Council’) B.R.Ambedkar(special reference to ‘Indian Women’s Liberation Day’)and many more. The Tagore family, including Rabindranath, Jnadanandini Devi, SwarnaKumari Devi, Sarala Devi Choudhirani (special reference to founding Bharat Stree Mahamandal) contributed greatly towards emancipation of women. Some prominent foreign women themselves pulled the cart of women’s rights and made a hallmark in our society. Foreign activists like Dr. Annie Besant (special reference to women’s education, suffrage, birth control, Devadasi system etc.) Sister Nivedita(special reference to women’s education, social services, economic independence, political participation), Sri

Maa, nee, Mirra Alfassa (special reference to education, spiritual upliftment), Nellie Sengupta etc. were front-runners in this respect. Very few of us are aware that Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar was a champion of women's rights throughout his life. Begum Rokeya was herself an institution and an exception in her community who cast a beacon for women's education and rights in India. She has been widely known for her role and her strength in her exemplary endeavours in India and abroad.

We know that possible topics on the women's empowerment have earlier been like women's education, polygamy, Suttee, purdah, divorce on trivial ground, religious and social divide, health and nutrition, female foeticide, sanction against women's public life, economic and social domination of women by men etc. Modern thinkers and activists for women's rights have added to the agenda, like food security of the women in the family, equal status and equal pay for equal work in every sphere, including defence, sports and film industry, women trafficking, gender gap, women's lib, digital gender divide etc. Over the decades, much has been achieved in the process, but much remains unavailable, unachieved. Women empowerment is still an issue and still a big challenge for the modern age in many parts of the world and in many pockets of a nation. For example, women's participation in politics and legislatures are far from the half-way mark.

We have seen plenty of articles, essays, pamphlets and books about women's plight in our society ever since the period mentioned above. The analysis of women's plight, their fight for self-respect and natural rights, the development of their inborn talents, fulfilment of their dreams etc. have found elaborate expression in these writings all over the world. The present time of 44 essays, most of them being scholarly attempts, are a natural extension of the same efforts in this tradition. It's indeed a contemporary attempt to explore the present-day investigation into the chosen topic: "Women Empowerment in India and Beyond".

This monolithic anthology of essays covers almost every angle of the subject matter: women empowerment in its multifaceted issues. The current enterprise of the book from the Department of Political Science, Kanchrapara College, West Bengal, in collaboration with its Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), is a bold attempt that encompasses various well-thought aspects of the core problem.

Some of the titles of the articles by the contributors would drive home the point best. These include classical, traditional, as well as futuristic aspects. I would mention some of them.

1) Women Empowerment in India: Ancient to Modern Period (by Dr. Bimalendu Ghosh)
2) E-governance and Women Empowerment in India (by Sourav Ghosh)
3) A Study on Child Sexual Abuse and Law in India (POCSO) (by Fahaduddin)
4) Intersectional Analysis of Rural Housing and Gender Equality(by Goutam Kumar Shaw)
5) Women the Half Sky: Female foeticide and its experimental derivatives(by Chandrima Basu)
6) Women and Economy: A Critical Analysis (by Dr. Deepanjana Halder Majumder)
7) Folk Crafts of Bengal and Women Development: a Multifaceted Analysis(by Dr. Shipra Bhattacharjee)
8) Role of Women and Women's Organisations in Women's Welfare (by SuchetanaDhar)
9) Status and Condition of Women in Ancient Mediaeval and Modern India (by Tanika Das)
10) Economic Development and Women Empowerment (by Dr. Sanchita Jana)
11) Integrating Feminist and Employment Theory in Social Work Practice: A Framework for Promoting Social Justice and Equality (by Dr. Sumita Saha)
12) Global Women Empowerment: An Appraisal (by Debaroti Das)
13) Vivekananda's Vision of Empowerment for Women and Impact of India's SHG(self-help group) Movement (by Md Ajmal Hoque)
14) The Contribution of Sports to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (by Dr. Himansu Poddar)
15) Patriarchal Mindset : Effect on the Presidential Elections of the USA (by Neelava Ghoshal)

16) Women in India: Rudali—the Extinct Community in the Colonial Era (by Ankit Raj Saha)

17) Women Empowerment and Digitization: Bridging the Gender Drive (by Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar)

We also wonder to know that the appended list of contributors present a veritable Who's who of the essayists, culled from a spectrum of (undergraduate) students, researchers, scholars and professors of many a college and university, who have apparently dealt in the chosen theme with the ease and conviction that such a human-centred project demands.

Obviously, due credit for successfully shouldering such an immense project goes to the Trio of editors, namely Dr. Bimalendu Ghosh, Dr. Bhaswati Chakraborty and Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar who have aptly handled the materials gathered from brilliant scholastic sources.

The present anthology would certainly remain a handbook of serious study for the students and researchers of social justice as well as readers who seek sincere and genuine deliberations on the instant topic.

The credit of publishing such a nice collection of essays certainly goes to Kunal Books, New Delhi.

Sailendra Nath Datta
WBCS (Executive) &
Joint Secretary (Retd).
Government of West Bengal,
President, Bengal Theosophical Federation

PREFACE

The advancement of women's rights and empowerment is a critical element in achieving global development and ensuring equitable growth. As societies evolve, the role of women has been increasingly recognized as vital in driving progress across various sectors, ranging from education and healthcare to politics and economy. Needless to say, our era is the era of Women empowerment. Not only feminists, but also the common people have also been raising their voice for Women's safety, security and empowerment. It's true that just like their male counterparts; women have been enjoying rights and opportunities as per the ideals of Gender equality. In fact, women have been exercising rights all over the world in all spheres of life. They have been enjoying equal rights just as men in social, cultural, educational, religious, political and literary spheres and even in the sphere of economy. Besides, they have been enjoying enormous privileges in the field of games and sports. But the most perceptible phenomenon is that they have at present gained a strong hold in the economic arena. They have been quite able and capable as well to engage themselves in different kinds of Job and service and thereby they have been earning their own livelihood as well as supporting their families. It is this economic solvency of the women that has largely precipitated their empowerment. Along with this, the increasing presence and growing role of women in politics, especially power politics of the government has actually strengthened the whole environment of Women's empowerment. It is in this way that the women have at present been really empowered throughout the world. Despite these advancements, significant disparities remain, necessitating on-going dialogue and action. In this context the Book "**Women Empowerment in India and Beyond"** will indeed become a very relevant and comprehensive document.

The Book **"Women Empowerment in India and Beyond"** has made an attempt to understand the key issues of Women empowerment in India and abroad. The Book gives quite a clear

glance at almost all the aspects of the Women Empowerment of present day India as well abroad. The Book "**Women Empowerment in India and Beyond** "has been focused on Theoretical Considerations & Contemporary Relevance of Women Empowerment, Women and our society, Feminist view of Women empowerment, Common view of Women empowerment, Gender equality and Women, Power Politics and Women, Safety and Security of Women, Different issues of women empowerment, Man and Women in the role of Women empowerment, Economic Empowerment and Women, Political Participation and Leadership, The Role of Technology in Women Empowerment and various issues of India and abroad.

The edited volume **"Women Empowerment in India and Beyond"** is indeed an outcome of a very acclaimed International Seminar titled **"Women Empowerment and the World"** organized by Department of Political Science in Collaboration with IQAC, Kanchrapara College, Kanchrapara, 24 Pgs.(N), West Bengal**,** held on 14, November, 2024, under the platform of the Department of Political Science & IQAC, Kanchrapara College, Kanchrapara, 24 Pgs.(N), West Bengal, India. A number of Resource Persons, Academicians, Researchers, Students, Civil Society Activists and interested personalities have participated and presented their Research Papers in the said glossy and glamorous International Seminar. The Book contains the Research Articles of immense significance in regard to various issues of Women Empowerment in India and abroad. We express our sincere appreciation to all the Paper Contributors for their valuable works and research orientations. We do also like to mention in this connection that the views, expressed in the Papers of the Book, are completely of the Contributors concerned.

In the august occasion of the publication of the book **"Women Empowerment in India and Beyond",** We would like to express our deep sense of gratitude to Dr. AnjanRoychoudhury, President of Governing Body, Kanchrapara College, and Dr. Biswanath Chakraborty, Keynote speakers whose invaluable guidance and support have helped us a lot to publish the Book. Again, We would like to express our deep sense of gratitude to Dr. Pranab Kumar Bera, Principal, Kanchrapara College, 24 Pgs.(N), West Bengal, India, whose invaluable guidance and support have helped us a lot to organise the glaring International Seminar and also to publish the

Book. We do also express, in this jolly event of the publication of the Book, our deepest sense of gratitude to all members of Kanchrapara College, 24 Pgs.(N), West Bengal, India for their enduring support and valuable cooperation as well.

It is also to be mentioned here that the issues regarding the Women Empowerment in India as well as the world of the present day India as well as the world, deliberated in the Papers of the Book "Women Empowerment in India and Beyond ", indeed deserve more attention. The Book will therefore really become a very useful document to be gone through and studied for further research. We sincerely hope that this Book will be of great importance to the academicians, Researchers, Students, Social workers, Human Rights Activists, Politicians, Doctors, Environmentalists, Health conscious people and interested persons as well as the common Readers.

In fine we do express our heartiest thanks to Mr. Prem Singh Bisht, the Publisher, and all the members of the Staff of the Kunal Books, Daryaganj, New Delhi, India for helping us a lot to Publish the Book and without their hard work, we do acknowledge, the Book could not have been able to see light of the day.

In this connection we do also express our heartfelt thanks to all those Friends who have helped us directly and indirectly to publish the Book.

Dr. Bimalendu Ghosh
Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar
Dr. Bhawati Chakrabortty
Editors

CONTENTS

Foreword ***v***

Preface ***ix***

List of Contributors ***xvii***

1. Women Empowerment in India: Ancient to Modern Period 1

Dr. Bimalendu Ghosh

2. Empowerment and Women Society of Backward Class in 21st Century 10

Dr. Sukesh Biswas

3. E-Governance and Women Empowerment in India 30

Sourav Ghosh

4. Empowering Voices: Women in India 36

Moumita Chatterjee

5. Intersectional Analysis of Rural Housing and Gender Equality 51

Goutam Kumar Shaw

6. Prevention and Remedies of Bhopal Gas Accident in Women's Society: A Historical Review 56

Anjan Ghosh

7. Unveiling Possibilities: Exploring the Various Aspects of Women's Empowerment in India 61

Buddhadeb Laha

8. Women: The Half Sky, Female Foeticide and it's Experiential Derivatives 69

Chandrima Basu

9. Women and Economy: A Critical Analysis 76

Dr. Deepanjana Halder Majumder

10. **Women in Libraries: A Legacy of Achievement and a Path to Leadership** **84**
Dr. Nantu Acharjya

11. **Unlocking Potential: The Indispensable Role of Women's Financial Inclusion in Developing Economies** **93**
Nilendu Chatterjee

12. **Women's Empowerment in India: Issues and Challenges** **105**
Dr. Nemai Chandra Das

13. **Appraising Women's Position in context of Gender Discrimination: A Constitutional Analysis** **110**
Nirmal Kumar Sahoo

14. **A Theoretical Study on Status of Women in Indian Society & Challenges** **120**
Pradip Karmakar

15. **Global Perspectives on Women's Safety and Security: Challenges and Pathways to Empowerment** **128**
Puja Dhar

16. **Entrepreneurship and the Role of Women: A Comparative Analysis of Socio-Cultural Differences between North (West Bengal) and South (Tamil Nadu) India** **141**
Sagarika Mondal

17. **Folk Crafts of Bengal and Women Development: A Multifaceted Analysis** **162**
Dr. Shipra Bhattacharjee

18. **Status of Women: A Comprehensive Study of the Women in Politics in India** **176**
Sk Abdul Amanullah

19. **Role of Women and Women's Organisations in Women Welfare** **190**
Suchetana Dhar

20. **Status and Condition of Women in Ancient, Medieval and Modern India** **205**
Tanika Das

21. The Challenges of Gender inequality to Women Empowerment in India **214**

Amitava Banik

22. Economic Development and Women Empowerment **223**

Sanchita Jana

23. Global Women Empowerment: An Appraisal **231**

Debaroti Das

24. Bridging the Gender Gap: Women Entrepreneurs in Indian MSMEs **242**

Dr. Sanchita De

25. Empowering Women, Enhancing Livelihoods: A Study on Economic Empowerment via Self-Help Groups in South 24 Parganas, Canning, Block-1, West Bengal. **259**

Nibedita Mallick

26. Vivekananda's Vision of Empowerment for Women and the Impact of India's SHG (Self-Help Group) Movement **270**

Md Ajmal Hoque

27. Integrating Feminist and Empowerment Theory in Social Work Practice: A Framework for Promoting Social Justice and Equality **285**

Dr. Sumita Saha

28. The Contribution of Sports to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment **295**

Dr. Himangsu Poddar

29. Multiple Barriers to Women's Empowerment **305**

Ritika Dhar

30. The Plight of Women: Safety and Security Problems in India **309**

Soumyadeep Bhowmik & Achyutananda Saha

31. Patriarchal Mindset: Effect on the Presidential Election of U.S.A **321**

Neelava Ghoshal

32. Women, Power, and Politics: Challenges and Triumphs in Political Leadership **330**
Md Nurul Hasan Sk

33. Women's Welfare in India: Removing Social Customs and Strengthening Constitutional Rights **342**
Nirmal Das

34. Bridging Tradition and Modernity: The Saga of Empowerment Journey of Sabar Women in Purulia **354**
Dr. Munai Paramanik

35. Women and Domestic Violence in Indian Society: Possible Ways to Prevent it **365**
Saptadwipa Karmakar

36. Women Empowerment through Women Leadership **372**
Dr. Reena Nand

37. Women in India: Rudali-The Extinct Community in the Colonial Era **385**
Ankit Raj Saha

38. Sustainable Empowerment of Women through Fishery Activities in India **393**
Sk Rahaman Ali & Dr. Joydev Maity

39. Women Empowerment in the Indian Context **409**
Dr. Chandan Sarkar

40. Inequality, Education, Employment, and Marginalised Sections **416**
Dr. Madhop Mandal & Dr. Moumita Roy

41. Pivot to Modernity, Women's Education and Emergence of Women Medics in Colonial Bengal **436**
Mithun Biswas

42. Women's Empowerment through the SHGs- A Step forward to Rural Development in India **449**
Gargi Sengupta

43. Women Empowerment and Digitization: Bridging the Gender Divide **461**
Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar

44. A Study on Child Sexual Abuse and Law in India (POCSO) **469**

Fahaduddin

45. Women in India: Tidings and History of The Northeastern Indian Women **476**

B. Lalrempuia

46. Economic Empowerment : Women's Voices and Challenges **485**

Susama Middya

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

1. **Achyutananda Saha,** M.A in Modern History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal.
2. **Sk Abdul Amanullah,** Ph.D., Research Scholar, Department of Political Science RKDF University, Ranchi, India.
3. **Md Ajmal Hoque,** Pursuing M.A., Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, West Bengal.
4. **Amitava Banik,** B.E., an Independent Scholar. He is Presently a Fellow of Insurance Institute of India (FIII).
5. **Anjan Ghosh,** Ph.D., Research Scholar, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, West Bengal.
6. **Ankit Raj Saha,** Student of Post-Graduation, Department of Political Science, Adamas University, Kolkata, West Bengal.
7. **Dr. Bimalendu Ghosh,** Associate Professor & Head, Department of Political Science, Kanchrapara College, 24 Pgs.(N), West Bengal.
8. **Buddhadeb Laha,** SACT-1, Raja Peary Mohan College, Uttarpara, Hooghly, West Bengal
9. **B. Lalrempuia,** Student of Post-Graduation, Department of Political Science, Adamas University, Kolkata, West Bengal.
10. **Chandrima Basu,**Adamas University, Departments- Political Science, Masters in Public Administration (Student), West Bengal.
11. **Dr. Chandan Sarkar,** Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, P. N. Das College, Palta, North 24 Parganas District, West Bengal, India.
12. **Dr. Deepanjana Halder Majumder,** Ex-Student, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal.
13. **Debaroti Das,** SACT, P.N.Das College, Palta, West Bengal, India.
14. **Fahaduddin,** Research Scholar, SKMU.

15. **Gargi Sengupta,** Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Chapra Bangaljhi Mahavidyalaya, Nadia, West Bengal.
16. **Goutam Kumar Shaw,** Research Scholar at Jadavpur University (IR), M.Phil. in Political Science from Burdwan University, Qualified NET Six Times & WBSET.
16. **Dr. Himangsu Poddar,** Assistant Professor & Head, Department of Physical Education, Cooch Behar College, Cooch Behar, West Bengal.
17. **Dr. Joydev Maity,** Associate Professor, Department of Fishery Sciences, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore, 721102, West Bengal, India.
18. **Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar,** Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Kanchrapara College, 24 Pgs.(N), West Bengal.
19. **Dr. Madhop Mandal,** Associate Professor Department of Hindi, Kanchrapara College, University of Kalyani, West Bengal.
20. **Mithun Biswas,** Assistant Professor, Department of History, Kanchrapara College, 24 Pgs.(N), West Bengal.
21. **Dr. Moumita Roy,** Assistant Professor in Commerce, Kanchrapara College, University of Kalyani, West Bengal.
22. **Moumita Chatterjee,** Ex M.A. Student, Department of International Relations Jadavpur University &Susmita College of Education, B.ED.
23. **Dr. Munai Paramanik,** Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Balarampur College, Purulia, West Bengal.
24. **Dr. Nantu Acharjya,** Librarian, Kanchrapara College Kanchrapara, 24 Parganas (N), West Bengal.
25. **Nibedita Mallick,** Assistant Professor in Commerce, Bankim Sardar College (Calcutta University), Kolkata (West Bengal), India.
26. **Neelava Ghoshal,** Pursuing M.A. Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, West Bengal
27. **Dr.Nemai Chandra Das,** Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Sudhiranjan Lahiri Mahavidyalaya, Majdia, Nadia, West Bengal.
28. **Nilendu Chatterjee,** Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Bankim Sardar College, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India.

29. **Nirmal Kumar Sahoo,** Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Sailajananda Falguni Smriti Mahavidyalaya, Khayrasole, Birbhum, West Bengal.
30. **Nirmal Das,** SACT-I, Department of Political Science, Purbasthali College, West Bengal.
31. **Md Nurul Hasan Sk,** State Aided College Teacher-1, Department of Political Science, Jalangi Mahavidyalaya, Jalangi, Murshidabad, West Bengal.
32. **Pradip Karmakar,** State Aided College Teacher – I, Department of Political Science S.F.S. Mahavidyalaya, Khayrasole, Birbhum, West Bengal.
33. **Puja Dhar,** Lecturer at Prabhujagat Bandhu College, Andul, Howrah, West Bengal.
34. **Sk Rahaman Ali,** Research Scholar, Women's Studies Centre, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore – 721102, West Bengal.
35. **Dr. Reena Nand,** Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University, Ranchi, India.
36. **Ritika Dhar,** M.A. Ex-Student Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, West Bengal.
37. **Sagarika Mondal,** Research Scholar, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal.
38. **Saptadwipa Karmakar,** M.A. Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, West Bengal.
39. **Dr. Sanchita De,** Associate Professor, Dept. of Basic Science & Humanities, Institute of Engineering & Management, Kolkata, University of Engineering and Management, Kolkata, West Bengal.
40. **Sanchita Jana,** Assistant Teacher at a Government aided High School, West Bengal.
41. **Dr. Shipra Bhattacharjee,** Assistant Professor, Department of Bengali, Centre for Distance and Online Education, Vidyasagar University, Paschim Midnapore, West Bengal.
42. **Soumyadeep Bhowmik,** M.A in Politics and International Relations, Central University of Punjab, Punjab, India.
43. **Sourav Ghosh,** M.A., B.ED., Educator Assistant, Dwijendralal College, Krishnanagar, Nadia, West Bengal

44. **Suchetana Dhar,** M.A. Ex-Student of Presidency University, Kolkata, West Bengal.

45. **Dr. Sukesh Biswas,** Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Amdanga Jugal Kishore Mahavidyalaya, Amdanga, West Bengal.

46. **Dr. Sumita Saha,** Assistan Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, Ghoksadanga Birendra Mahavidyalaya Ghoksadanga, Cooch Behar, West Bengal.

47. **Susoma Middya,** M.A., Researcher, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal.

48. **Tanika Das,** M.A., B.ED., Ex-Student of Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, West Bengal.

1

Women Empowerment in India: Ancient to Modern Period

Dr. Bimalendu Ghosh

Abstract

Women constitute half of the total population of India from ancient period to present day. Women empowerment in India has undergone significant transformations from the ancient to the modern period, shaped by social, cultural, and political changes. In ancient India, women held a revered position in society, with roles in religious, philosophical, and cultural spheres. Texts like the Vedas and Upanishads highlight the importance of women as spiritual and intellectual figures. However, over time, patriarchal structures emerged, leading to restricted social roles and limited freedom for women, especially during the medieval and colonial periods. The British colonial era further entrenched gender disparities, but also saw the rise of social reform movements advocating for women's rights. Leaders such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Pandita Ramabai and Begum Roquiah Sakhawat Hossain played pivotal roles in challenging traditional norms, fighting for women's education, and promoting legal reforms like the abolition of Sati and the promotion of widow remarriage. The post-independence era brought new opportunities for women, particularly through constitutional guarantees of equality and affirmative actions in education, employment, and political participation. Figures like Indira Gandhi, Pratibha Patil India's first female Prime Minister and first female president respectively symbolized the growing political and economic presence of women in Indian society. However, issues such as gender-based violence, income inequality, and underrepresentation in leadership positions continue to persist, indicating the need for on-going efforts toward full empowerment. In this context, my article seeks women's position from ancient period to till date. Further my article analyses progress of women empowerment and also constrains of women empowerment.

Keywords: *Empowerment, opportunity, patriarchy, exploitation, superior-subordinate*

Introduction:

Women empowerment may be defined in several ways, including accepting women's viewpoints, making an effort to seek them and raising the status of women through education, awareness, and literacy, equal status in society, better livelihood and training. In other words, Women's empowerment means exercising their power and their own actions. This means having control over your own material assets, intellectual resources, and your own ideologies. The empowerment of women in India has been a dynamic journey through history, shaped by cultural, social, economic, and political forces. From ancient times to the present day, women's roles in Indian society have fluctuated, with varying degrees of autonomy, rights, and recognition. This narrative explores the journey of women's empowerment in India, with references to historical periods, legal reforms, and key social movements.

Women Empowerment in Ancient India:

In ancient India, during the Vedic period, women enjoyed a relatively high status in society. During that period, women got to live equal life just like men used to live. These women were competitive with men in many fields and also received and enjoyed their rights and equality, there were no restrictions on them, and they possessed great wealth and property. In other words, they were considered equal to men in many ways, with freedom to participate in intellectual, spiritual, and social spheres.

In ancient Indian culture, women were treated as equal to men, and there was no discrimination on the bases of gender, instead of that women were honored by society, and society at the time considered women as **Janani** which means **mother**, even in Hindu scripts women are considered as **Devi.** They used to enjoy their full basic rights where they were free to receive education, at that time the wives of the Rishis could willing to take part in spiritual activities with their husbands, they were also known as the **Ardhangini** (better half) too. In the ancient text of the Vedas, the concept of humans is bedrock for society, in Taittiriya Samhita women and men were considered as the two-wheel of a cart. However, over time, as patriarchal norms began to emerge, the position of women started to decline. The later Vedic period, post-Vedic texts like Manusmriti (200 BCE), laid down restrictive roles for women.

Women in Medieval India:

The position of the women which was equal in the early Vedic period later had a downward trend in later Vedic period. It is believed that foreign conquest is the main reason for the decline of women's status in that era. Women were forced to get married and or involve in domestic life and have an in disposable devotion to their husbands. At that time parents were ashamed of the born of a girl child. There were many restrictions like Sati, Jauhar, and no education for girls, widow re-marriage, child marriage, and many more.

The concept of **sati** is when a woman's husband dies then the woman had to sit on the burning fire with her husband and burn herself to death. In old Hindu scripts, it was believed that when a woman dies as a sati, the doors of heaven open up for her straight. Today **Jauhar** is just a mass suicide, but in the medieval period, it was a Rajput custom, where the Rajput women sacrificed their lives for their husbands when they were about to lose a battle.

However, during medieval times, India saw the rise of strong women rulers, but the general societal structure became increasingly patriarchal. Women were largely confined to domestic roles, though they occasionally held positions of power. Rani Durgavati (16th century), a warrior queen, is an example of women in leadership during this period. She defended her kingdom against the Mughal invasions (Chauhan, 2012). Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi was another powerful figure in the 19th century who fought against British colonial forces during the Indian Rebellion of 1857 (Kumar, 1999).

Religious Reform Movements

During this period, the Bhakti movement (7th–17th century), which emphasized devotion to God over rigid rituals, offered a more egalitarian space where women actively participated. Mirabai, a poet-saint, defied social norms through her devotion to Lord Krishna, challenging both gender and caste-based restrictions (Narayan, 2008).

Colonial Period

Under British colonial rule, there was a mix of progress and setbacks for women. The British administration introduced laws aimed at curbing social practices like Sati (widow immolation) and child marriage, while at the same time, reinforcing a patriarchal structure. There have been social reforms and many men and took participated in them too like Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar,

Swami Vivekananda, and Swami Dayananda Saraswat. All of them had helped women to receive back their previous status in society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a prominent reformer who successfully campaigned for the abolition of Sati in 1829, citing human rights and social justice principles (Mukherjee, 2004). Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar advocated for widow remarriage(1856) and women's education, making significant contributions to the social reforms of the 19th century (Bhattacharya, 2010).

Women in the Independence Struggle

Indian women became prominent figures in the struggle for independence from British rule. Sarojini Naidu, known as the 'Nightingale of India,' was a key figure in the Indian National Congress and the independence movement, becoming the first woman to preside over the Congress in 1925 (Sharma, 2001). Kasturba Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's wife, was also deeply involved in the freedom struggle, especially in organizing women's participation (Gandhi, 1990). Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay contributed to cultural and social reforms, leading various organizations advocating for women's rights **(Chattopadhyay, 1985).** M.K. Gandhi made women an integral part of all struggles which he launched during the freedom struggle against British colonialism**.**

The activities of the British ruler and missionaries who came from England and other parts of Europe made some changes in the social and cultural life of Indians. The missionaries were in the favour of women's education and they set up several schools for girls, in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. Different education committees are recommended for women's education. In the Education Dispatch of 1854, a huge pressure was built on female education. This resulted in a number of girls' schools being set up in different parts of India.

Post-Independence India

India's independence in 1947 marked a significant shift in the legal landscape for women. The Indian Constitution (1950) was revolutionary in guaranteeing gender equality and granting women fundamental rights. Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees equality before the law, while Article 15 prohibits discrimination based on sex (Indian Constitution, 1950). The Hindu Marriage Act (1955) and the Hindu Succession Act (1956) provided women with legal rights in marriage, inheritance, and property (Menon, 1999). Human rights

ensure equal dignity for all people including women. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDW) is one of the most important initiatives of the United Nations Organization (UNO). It resists the violence and discrimination against women, it promised to restore the human rights of women and legal and political equality between men and women. However, women still facing the problems like, oppression, discrimination, dowry deaths, unemployment, declining sex ratio, lack of healthcare and infant mortality, etc.

The Rise of Women's Activism:

Post-independence India witnessed a significant rise in women's activism, advocating for gender equality, access to education, and the end of violence against women. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) was launched by the Indian government in 2015 to improve gender equality and reduce discrimination against girls (Government of India, 2015). The #MeToo India movement (2018) brought awareness to issues of sexual harassment and violence against women, encouraging women to share their experiences and demand change (Patel, 2018).

Political and Economic Empowerment:

The role of women in politics and the economy is the most effective and significant phase of women's empowerment in India. Women empowerment is a process that enables women to and control of, material, intellectual and human resources. Political empower means women and girls to successfully influence decision-makers, including men, through their advocacy of fairer, appropriate allocation of resources. Economic empowerment includes issues like poverty eradication, micro credit, women and economy, globalization, women and agriculture, women and industry & support services. This will give them the ability to generate income, own and control assets, access and use credit. They will realise greater choices in jobs and occupations and demand access to essential services for themselves, their families and their communities.

Women have made strides in politics and leadership roles, but challenges persist in terms of economic independence and workplace equality. Indira Gandhi remains one of the most powerful women leaders in India's history, serving as Prime Minister from 1966 to 1977 and again from 1980 to 1984 (Kohli, 2007). The Women's

Reservation Bill, introduced to provide 33% reservation for women in Parliament, continues to be debated in Indian politics (Pande, 2004). Sucheta Kripalani, Sashikala Kakodakar and Nandini Satpathy were Chief Ministers Pradesh, Goa and Orissa respectively, while Mayawati and Uma Bharati held chief Ministership of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh respectively. Jayalalitha, Sheila Dixit, Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Rabri Devi, Mamata Banerjee are the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Rajasthan, West Bengal respectively. Holding Chief Ministership in the real terms of administration is a tremendous task of responsibility and leadership. As chief ministers, women have proved themselves to be most successful. Keeping in mind the importance of women as human resource contributing to development, women were given political power through the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992. Consequently 1/3 of the total member of seats in the Indian Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) got reserved for women in India.

Challenges and Continuing Struggles:

The Constitution of India guarantees equal rights to women. Besides exercising their franchise, they can contest for any political office. There would not be any discrimination on the basis of sex. Despite this, women in India still face significant challenges:

Firstly, Gender-Based Violence remains widespread, with instances of rape, domestic violence, and human trafficking reported regularly. National Crime Records Bureau (2020) provides alarming statistics about violence against women, including crimes such as rape and dowry deaths in India. It is easy to read the story of women in India as a litany of grim statistics. From 1953 to 2011, the annual incidence of rape rose by 873 per cent -three times faster than all other crimes, including murder, theft, and kidnapping. An overwhelming number of rapes and sexual assaults are perpetrated within the family or the social unit, which creates a conspiracy of silence against the victim and makes complaining almost impossible. Cruel treatment by the husband or his relatives constitutes 43.6 per cent of total crimes against women in India. Another survey shows that 35 to 75% of women in India face verbal, physical, or sexual violence from their partners or other men known them.

Secondly, Economic Inequality continues to affect women, with disparities in wages, employment opportunities, and financial independence. Gender Wage Gap Reports from organizations like the World Economic Forum consistently highlight the inequality

women face in terms of pay and opportunities in the workforce. Official figures show that 94 per cent of women in India work in the informal economy. According to a government survey, over 3.5 million women entered the workforce in India's urban areas between 2011 and 2013. At the same time, a staggering 9.1 million women dropped out of the rural workforce.

Traditionally, since sons are thought to take care of their parents during old age and daughters are considered a burden because of dowry and other expenses that have to be incurred during their marriage, female children are neglected in the matters of nutrition, education and other important aspects of well-being. The sex ratio in our country is abysmally low. It was only 940 females per 1000 males according to the 2011 census. The sex ratio is an important indicator of development. Developed countries usually have sex ratios above 1000. For instance, the USA has a sex ratio of 1029, Japan 1041 and Russia 1140. In India, Kerala is the state with the highest sex ratio of 1084 and Haryana is one with the lowest value of 877.

Thirdly, Access to Education and healthcare remains limited for many women, especially in rural areas. A survey shows that a higher percentage of rural women (36%) were subjected to violence than women living in urban areas (28%), and a significantly greater proportion of women with little or no education experienced violence compared to their educated sisters. Only 14% of women with 12 or more years of schooling reported experiencing violence while the figure for illiterate women was 44%. Violence was reported by a higher percentage of currently married women (37.4%) than never married women (16.1%). But 66% of divorced, separated or deserted women reported having experienced physical violence. Violence was much more prevalent among women from the scheduled castes and tribes (39-42%) than among those from the higher castes (27%).

Fourthly, According to a study on the status of women in commissioned by the UN development agencies based in India, women have little or no say in decision-making at all levels of society. Women at every level are excluded from decision-making at every stage, starting from the family. As long as women would be left behind in the process of decision-making, it would be hard to get the democratic process started. The balanced participation of women and men in the decision making process is an essential requirement of democracy and a positive step for society**,** as decisions then take into account the needs and interest of the population as a whole.

Conclusion:

For centuries, women were treated as less than equal to men in many ways. Women were not allowed to vote, own property, or work in many jobs. The scenario has changing gradually. Women's empowerment in India has evolved from a period of intellectual freedom and leadership in ancient times to a history marked by struggle, reform, and resilience. While legal reforms have brought significant advancements, much work remains to ensure full gender equality. Women's continued participation in political, economic, and social spheres is essential to the nation's progress. As India moves forward, embracing the strength and potential of its women will be crucial to shaping a just and equal society. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore argued for women empowerment as follows:

"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".

-Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

" Woman is the builder and moulder of nation's destiny. Though delicate and soft as a lily, she has a heart, far stronger and bolder than of man.... She is the supreme inspiration for man's onward march.... she is no doubt, her commanding personality, nevertheless is grimly solemn"

-Rabindranath Tagore

References:

Bagchi, Indrani (APRIL 2014), The Struggle for Women's Empowerment in India, Current History, Vol. 113, No. 762, *South Asia*, pp. 144- 149.

Beniwal, Anju (January - March, 2013), Gender Discrimination and Empowerment 0f Women In India: A View, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 74, No. 1, pp.27-38.

Bhattacharya, S. (2010), *Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar: A Reformer's Legacy*, Kolkata: Prakash Book Depot.

Chauhan, P. (2012), *Warriors of India: From Rani Durgavati to Rani Lakshmibai*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

Chattopadhyay, K. D. (1985), *Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay: A Memoir*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Devi Syamala, D and G. Lakshmi (Jan.- March, 2005), *Political Empowerment of Women in Indian Legislature : A Study, The Indian Journal of Political Science,* Vol. 66, No. 1, pp. 75-92.

Dumont, L. (1980). *Hinduism: The View from Paris*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gandhi, M. (1990), *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House.

Government of India (2015), *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: A National Campaign*. New Delhi: Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Kohli, A. (2007), *India's Political Economy: The Past, Present, and Future*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kumar, R. (1999), *The History of the Indian Rebellion of 1857-1859*, New Delhi: HarperCollins.

Menon, N. (1999), *Gender and Politics in India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Misra, Jugal Kishore (OCT. - DEC., 2006), *Empowerment Of Women In India*, The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 67, No. 4 ,pp. 867-878.

Mukherjee, R. (2004), *Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his Social Reform Movements*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.

Narayan, J. (2008), *Mirabai: The Saint and the Poet*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

Pande, S. (2004), *Women and Indian Politics: The Continuum*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Patel, M. (2018), *#MeToo in India: A Movement for Change*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Rao, K. (2014), *Women in Vedic Culture*, New Delhi: Arya Publications.

Saxena, Kiran (October - December 1994), *Empowerment Of Women : The Indian Context*, The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 55, No. 4, pp. 391-400.

Sharma, R. (1984), *The Vedic Age*, New De hi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Visaria, Leela (Nov. 29 - Dec. 5, 2008), Violence against Women in India: Is Empowerment a Protective Factor? *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, No. 48, pp. 60-66

Women's empowerment in India, from ancient period to modern time period, https: / / timesofindia.indiatimes.com / readersblog / scatteredthoughts / womens-empowerment-in-india-from-ancient-period-to-modern-time-period-46689 / . accessed on 25.01.2025.

2

Empowerment and Women Society of Backward Class in 21st Century

Dr. Sukesh Biswas

Abstract

The empowerment of women in backward communities has become a crucial focus in the 21st century, aiming to address deep-seated inequalities and enhance social development. Women in these communities often face compounded marginalization due to socio-economic, cultural, and educational barriers that limit access to opportunities. Empowerment, therefore, is a multi-dimensional process that requires improvements in education, economic participation, health, political representation, and social status. In recent years, policies and initiatives by governments and NGOs have sought to address these areas by promoting education and vocational training, facilitating financial independence through microfinance and self-help groups, and enhancing legal protections against discrimination and violence.

Awareness programs are reshaping societal perceptions and emphasizing the significance of women's roles in family and community leadership. Digital access and literacy programs have also started to bridge knowledge and opportunity gaps, enabling women to participate in a digital economy and access broader networks. While progress has been made, challenges remain, including patriarchal resistance, limited policy implementation, and the need for culturally sensitive interventions. Empowering women from backward classes is fundamental to fostering an inclusive, resilient society, where all individuals can contribute to and benefit from national development. Thus, advancing women's empowerment in marginalized communities is both a social responsibility and a strategic imperative for sustainable progress in the 21st century.

Keywords: *Women Empowerment, Backward Communities, Socio-economic Barriers, Gender Equality, Sustainable Development*

Introduction:

In the 21st century, women's empowerment has emerged as a pivotal force for social progress, with increasing focus on creating inclusive spaces for women across all social strata. However, for women from backward classes, significant barriers rooted in caste, gender, and economic disparities remain. Historically, these women have faced marginalization not only due to gender but also as a result of entrenched social and cultural biases that limit access to education, employment, healthcare, and legal rights. Empowerment for women in backward classes thus extends beyond personal or economic advancement; it is tied to broader issues of social justice, equality, and dismantling systemic discrimination.

This paper delves into the multifaceted nature of empowerment for these women, examining how governmental policies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based initiatives have attempted to bridge the gap. It highlights initiatives aimed at promoting education, financial independence, healthcare access, and rights awareness, while analyzing both the successes and limitations encountered. Through this lens, the study also explores the unique challenges faced by women in backward classes, underscoring the need for context-specific strategies that address their complex realities. Ultimately, this paper posits that empowering these women is essential not only for their upliftment but for fostering inclusive and equitable societal development.

Background of the study:

The background of this study on "Empowerment and Women's Society of Backward Classes in the 21st Century" lies in the ongoing struggle for social equality and justice among historically marginalized communities. Women from backward classes, often disadvantaged by intersections of caste, gender, and economic status, face persistent barriers to education, employment, and healthcare. These obstacles have deep historical roots, with centuries of social and cultural discrimination limiting their opportunities for advancement. Despite significant strides in gender equality, backward-class women continue to grapple with unique challenges that hinder their social, economic, and political empowerment.

The Indian government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and grassroots movements have intensified efforts to address these disparities through policies and programs that target educational access, economic independence, health awareness, and legal rights.

These initiatives seek to bridge existing gaps and empower backward-class women to actively participate in the nation's development. However, progress remains uneven, highlighting the need for a focused study on the specific barriers these women face and the efficacy of current empowerment strategies. Understanding and addressing these challenges, this research aims to support the creation of more inclusive pathways to empower women from backward classes in contemporary society.

Research Questions:

The research questions for this study aim to identify the key barriers to empowerment for women from backward classes, evaluate the effectiveness of existing interventions, explore the role of education, and understand women's perspectives on empowerment. These questions provide a foundation for examining inclusive pathways toward social equality. Here are four research questions for the study on "Empowerment and Women's Society of Backward Classes in the 21st Century":

1. What are the primary socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers hindering the empowerment of women from backward classes in the 21st century?
2. How effective have government policies and NGO-led initiatives been in promoting education, healthcare, and economic independence among women from backward classes?
3. What role does education play in fostering empowerment and social mobility for women in backward classes?
4. How do women from backward classes perceive empowerment, and what specific forms of support do they identify as most impactful for improving their lives?

These questions aim to explore the barriers, effectiveness of interventions, role of education, and women's perspectives on empowerment to develop a comprehensive understanding of the empowerment journey for backward-class women in contemporary society.

Literature Review:

The literature on "Empowerment and Women's Society of Backward Classes in the 21st Century" highlights the multidimensional

barriers faced by these women, including caste, gender, and economic challenges. Key studies emphasize the roles of education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and legal rights as vital factors in empowerment. Government policies, NGO interventions, and grassroots efforts collectively contribute to addressing these issues.

Chopra, S., & Roy, N. (2022). Impact of NGO Interventions on Empowerment of Backward-Class Women in India. This paper explores the role of NGOs in advocating for backward-class women's rights, particularly in healthcare, education, and legal awareness. It examines case studies demonstrating NGO successes and challenges in fostering empowerment in underserved communities.

Sen, R. (2022). Legal Awareness and Empowerment: The Role of Rights Education among Backward-Class Women. Published in Gender and Society, this study examines how legal rights education empowers women from backward classes to challenge discrimination and claim their rights. Sen highlights the importance of legal literacy programs as tools for enabling social change and protecting women's rights in marginalized communities.

Khatri, L., & Yadav, H. (2021). Health and Empowerment of Women in India's Marginalized Communities. In this paper, Khatri and Yadav explore the role of healthcare access in empowering backward-class women, analyzing the impact of health-related NGO initiatives. The authors argue that improved healthcare access, particularly in rural areas, is essential to empowerment and overall quality of life.

Kumar, R. (2021). Gender and Caste-Based Disparities in Access to Economic Opportunities for Women. This research highlights how caste-based discrimination affects the economic empowerment of backward-class women. Kumar discusses the limited employment options available to these women and suggests microfinance and vocational training as potential solutions to enhance financial independence.

Bhardwaj, A., & Shukla, P. (2020). The Role of Education in Empowering Marginalized Women: An Analysis of Government Schemes in Rural India. Published in the Journal of Social Development Studies, this study focuses on the role of education in empowering backward-class women. It evaluates the effectiveness of various government programs, revealing that tailored educational initiatives have a positive impact on social mobility and self-reliance.

Sinha, M. (2019). Empowerment of Women in India: Issues, Challenges, and Directions. This paper examines the unique socio-economic challenges facing women from backward classes in India. It highlights the structural barriers—such as limited educational opportunities and restrictive cultural norms—that hinder empowerment and discusses recent policy shifts aimed at improving inclusivity.

Rao, S. (2019). Educational Policies and the Empowerment of Women in Backward Classes. This study reviews the impact of educational policies designed to support women from backward classes, examining how these policies affect literacy rates, employment, and social participation. Rao discusses both the successes and limitations of programs aimed at bridging educational gaps for these communities.

Das, P., & Sharma, K. (2018). Caste, Gender, and Social Exclusion: An Analysis of Women's Empowerment in Marginalized Communities. Published in the Journal of Social Inequality Studies, this paper explores how caste and gender intersect to limit empowerment opportunities for backward-class women. The authors analyze the effects of social exclusion on educational attainment and economic participation, emphasizing the need for targeted policy reforms.

The reviewed literature underscores that while significant efforts have been made to empower backward-class women, persistent socio-cultural and economic barriers continue to hinder progress. Education, healthcare, and legal awareness are consistently cited as transformative tools. However, more targeted, culturally sensitive strategies are needed to ensure these women's meaningful inclusion and empowerment in modern society.

Empowerment in the Context of Backward Classes:

Empowerment in the context of backward classes refers to the process of enabling individuals, particularly women, from marginalized communities to gain control over their lives and access opportunities that have historically been denied to them. For women from backward classes, empowerment is not just about achieving economic independence or educational attainment; it also involves dismantling deeply entrenched social structures of caste-based discrimination and gender inequality. These women face unique challenges, such as restricted mobility, limited access to resources,

and the dominance of patriarchal norms that confine them to traditional roles.

Empowerment for women in backward classes includes providing them with tools to challenge these barriers. Key elements of empowerment include access to quality education, healthcare, legal rights, and economic opportunities. Government initiatives like reservations in education and employment, and programs aimed at enhancing women's skills, have made strides, yet progress remains uneven. Cultural norms, caste-based exclusions, and a lack of awareness about rights continue to be significant hindrances. The empowerment process must, therefore, be holistic, encompassing legal, social, economic, and cultural dimensions. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), grassroots movements, and community-based initiatives also play a crucial role in addressing these challenges, working to create more inclusive opportunities for backward-class women in the 21st century.

Factors Affecting Empowerment:

The empowerment of women from backward classes is influenced by a multitude of interconnected factors that can either facilitate or impede their ability to participate equally in social, economic, and political spheres. These factors are deeply embedded in historical, socio-cultural, and economic systems that often leave backward-class women at a disadvantage, making their path to empowerment complex and multifaceted.

- **Economic Inequality and Limited Access to Resources:** One of the most significant factors affecting empowerment is economic inequality. Women from backward classes often face economic exclusion due to systemic barriers. Limited access to property, credit, and formal employment restricts their ability to achieve financial independence. Without control over their finances or the ability to access loans or land ownership, many women are economically dependent on their male counterparts. This dependency perpetuates their subordinate social position. Additionally, backward-class women often work in low-wage, informal sectors with little social security or job stability, exacerbating their vulnerability.
- **Caste-Based Discrimination and Patriarchy:** Caste-based discrimination is a critical factor that affects the empowerment of backward-class women. In India, caste is deeply intertwined

with social hierarchy, and women from lower castes experience "double discrimination" based on both their gender and caste. Caste hierarchies often dictate their roles in society, restricting them to specific jobs or positions within the community. Furthermore, patriarchal systems in backward communities reinforce gender roles that limit women's freedom and autonomy. Women are often expected to stay in domestic roles, with their identities tied to familial duties rather than individual aspirations. These cultural norms create a society where women's voices are silenced, and their needs are marginalized.

- **Educational Barriers:** Education plays a crucial role in empowering women, but backward-class women face significant obstacles in accessing quality education. In rural areas or economically deprived communities, schools may be poorly equipped, understaffed, or far from home, which discourages enrollment. Moreover, cultural attitudes that prioritize the education of boys over girls further exacerbate gender disparities. Parents, particularly in poor families, often see educating boys as a better investment, reinforcing the idea that girls should focus on domestic duties. This lack of education restricts backward-class women from acquiring the skills needed to improve their socio-economic status or participate in broader societal decision-making processes.
- **Legal and Institutional Barriers:** While India has laws to protect women's rights, the lack of legal awareness and access to justice remains a major issue. Many women from backward classes are not aware of their legal rights, such as the right to education, inheritance, or protection from violence. Furthermore, the judicial process can be lengthy and expensive, making it difficult for marginalized women to access justice. Corruption and the absence of effective law enforcement in rural and marginalized areas further complicate matters. Additionally, women often face societal stigma when seeking legal redress, discouraging them from pursuing their rights.
- **Health and Reproductive Rights**: Health disparities significantly impact the empowerment of women, particularly those from backward classes. Poor access to healthcare services, particularly maternal and reproductive health services, can limit women's autonomy. High maternal mortality rates,

inadequate postnatal care, and lack of access to family planning options prevent women from making informed choices about their health and family life. Additionally, backward-class women often lack access to affordable healthcare, which exacerbates their vulnerability to disease and poor health outcomes. Poor health not only limits their personal development but also affects their capacity to participate in economic activities and decision-making processes.

- **Social Support Systems and Infrastructure:** Limited access to social support systems, such as childcare, healthcare, and transportation, severely restricts the empowerment of backward-class women. In many rural areas, a lack of infrastructure, such as roads, safe transportation, and sanitation, exacerbates the burden on women. Moreover, there are few community support networks available to assist women in balancing their family responsibilities with work or educational pursuits. The absence of safe spaces for women, where they can express themselves and access services, further isolates them from opportunities that could lead to empowerment.
- **Political Participation and Representation:** Political empowerment is another area where backward-class women face challenges. Despite policies aimed at increasing female political participation, such as reservations in local governance, backward-class women still face considerable hurdles in participating in politics. These women often have limited political awareness or involvement due to a lack of education, social isolation, and economic dependency. Moreover, local patriarchal structures often prevent them from taking up leadership roles, even within their communities. The underrepresentation of backward-class women in decision-making bodies leads to policies that often fail to address their specific needs.

The empowerment of women from backward classes requires addressing these multifaceted barriers through a comprehensive and integrated approach. While progress has been made, particularly through government initiatives and civil society interventions, backward-class women continue to face unique challenges that demand tailored solutions. Empowerment efforts must focus not only on improving access to education, healthcare, and economic resources

but also on dismantling the societal norms that perpetuate caste and gender-based inequalities. These intersecting issues, we can create an environment where backward-class women can fully realize their potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

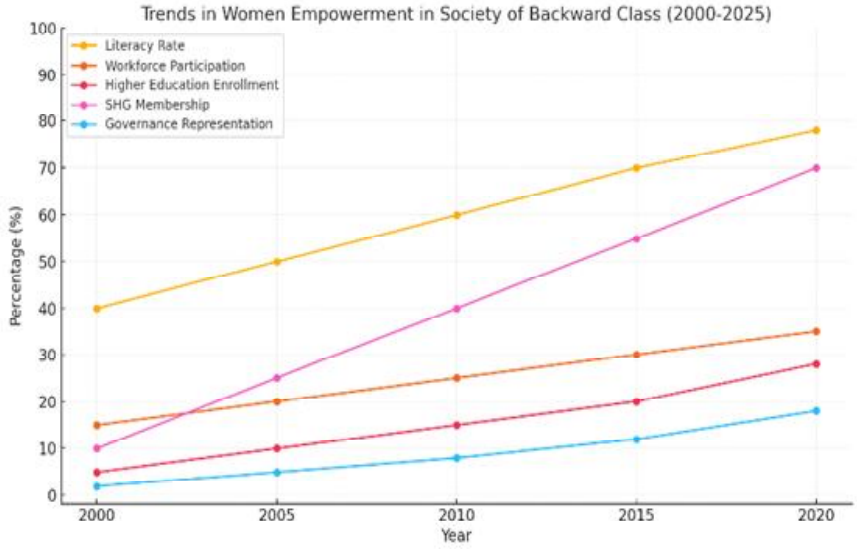
Research Methodology of the study:

The research methodology for studying Empowerment and Women in Society of Backward Class in the 21st Century adopts a qualitative approach to explore the lived experiences, societal dynamics, and cultural influences affecting women's empowerment. An ethnographic and phenomenological design will be employed to deeply understand the socio-economic challenges, perceptions, and aspirations of women belonging to backward classes. The study will be conducted in both rural and urban settings, with participants selected through purposive sampling to ensure diversity in terms of education, occupation, and socio-economic background. Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations will serve as primary data collection methods, enabling rich, nuanced insights into individual and collective experiences. Additionally, document analysis of relevant government policies, NGO reports, and community initiatives will provide context and triangulate findings. Data will be analyzed thematically, with patterns and narratives emerging through inductive coding and narrative analysis techniques. This methodology aims to uncover critical barriers to empowerment, evaluate the impact of initiatives, and offer actionable recommendations to promote gender equity and social inclusion in the 21st century.

Recent Trend of Women Empowerment in Society of Backward Class in the 21st Century:

Women empowerment in the society of backward classes in 21st-century India reflects a transformative journey toward equality, autonomy, and socio-economic upliftment. This empowerment signifies the enhancement of women's capabilities, access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, while ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes at family, community, and societal levels. Despite constitutional safeguards and government initiatives such as reservation policies, skill development programs, and gender-focused schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, women in backward classes continue to face systemic barriers rooted in patriarchal norms, poverty, and limited access to resources.

In the 21st century, globalization, technological advancements, and progressive policies have created opportunities for marginalized women to break free from traditional constraints. Access to education has been pivotal, enabling women from backward classes to challenge stereotypes and engage in diverse professions. Self-help groups (SHGs), microfinance, and grassroots-level movements have further empowered them economically, fostering financial independence and self-confidence. Empowerment in these communities is multifaceted, requiring a holistic approach. Socio-cultural challenges such as caste-based discrimination, early marriages, and domestic violence persist, impeding progress. Awareness campaigns, skill training, and community-driven initiatives are vital to fostering sustainable change.



True empowerment lies not only in providing resources but in creating an environment where women from backward classes can exercise their rights and contribute meaningfully to society. As India strides into the future, empowering these women is crucial for achieving social equity, economic development, and inclusive growth.

Economic Empowerment:

Economic empowerment for backward-class women is a transformative pathway toward independence, dignity, and societal participation. This empowerment is influenced by access to financial resources, property rights, quality employment, education, social security, and entrepreneurial support. However, backward-class

women encounter unique barriers in each of these areas due to a combination of economic, social, and structural inequalities that have persisted across generations. Breaking these barriers requires a holistic understanding of the factors involved and a multifaceted approach to overcome them. One major factor is access to financial resources, such as credit, loans, and savings opportunities. Many backward-class women, due to lack of collateral or formal employment, are denied financial services that could allow them to invest in small businesses or personal development. Access to microfinance, however, has proven beneficial in some regions, allowing women to establish income-generating activities, though access is still uneven and often limited to urban areas. Additionally, property ownership is a critical aspect of economic empowerment, as it provides women with financial security and autonomy. For backward-class women, the legal and social hurdles to owning property or land, often due to traditional inheritance laws and male dominance, limit their economic stability and restrict their autonomy in decision-making. This lack of ownership further affects their ability to secure credit, as property is a common form of collateral.

Employment opportunities are also essential for economic empowerment, yet backward-class women are often confined to low-wage, informal jobs without job security or benefits. This restriction arises from limited educational opportunities and ongoing discrimination in both urban and rural labor markets. Improving educational access, vocational training, and skill development can enhance these women's employment prospects, allowing them to achieve higher-paying jobs or pursue professional roles that align with their aspirations. Income autonomy and financial decision-making are equally important. For many backward-class women, even when they earn income, societal norms often require them to defer to male family members in managing finances. This lack of control over their own earnings limits their ability to make investments in family welfare or personal growth, perpetuating cycles of dependency. Additionally, access to social security programs, such as pensions, health insurance, and maternity benefits, remains limited for many backward-class women, particularly those in informal work, leaving them economically vulnerable and with fewer options for financial security.

Entrepreneurial support, including access to business networks, mentorship, and funding, is essential to empowering women who want to start or expand businesses. However, backward-class women

often lack access to these resources due to social isolation, discrimination, and limited local infrastructure. Addressing these issues requires targeted interventions from government, NGOs, and community groups to create an inclusive financial ecosystem where backward-class women can achieve economic empowerment, contributing to their own well-being and the development of their communities.

Social and Cultural Empowerment:

Social and cultural empowerment for backward-class women involves creating an environment where they can participate fully in society, free from discrimination and limitations imposed by traditional norms and caste-based hierarchies. Achieving this form of empowerment requires dismantling long-standing social structures that restrict women's mobility, education, decision-making, and overall participation in community life. For backward-class women, who often face a "double disadvantage" due to both their gender and caste, this empowerment is essential for breaking the cycle of marginalization and allowing them to assert their identities, aspirations, and rights. One major aspect of social and cultural empowerment is improving access to education. Education is a powerful tool that broadens perspectives, provides skills, and builds self-confidence. However, backward-class women often face barriers to quality education due to economic constraints, gender biases, and limited educational infrastructure in rural areas. When these women receive equal educational opportunities, they are more likely to challenge traditional roles, engage in civic life, and make informed decisions for themselves and their families. Programs that promote adult literacy and vocational training, tailored to the needs of backward-class women, are vital steps toward leveling the playing field.

aspect of social and cultural empowerment is the promotion of gender equality within the household and community. In many backward-class communities, patriarchal norms assign women a subordinate role, confining them to domestic work and limiting their decision-making power. Cultural beliefs often reinforce the idea that women should prioritize family responsibilities over personal development. Empowering backward-class women requires challenging these norms and encouraging both men and women to embrace more egalitarian roles. Community-based initiatives, including awareness campaigns and support groups, can help foster

an environment where women are respected and encouraged to take part in family and community decisions. Social empowerment includes ensuring women's rights to safety, dignity, and freedom from violence. For many backward-class women, domestic violence and community-based discrimination are persistent issues that undermine their confidence and autonomy. Safe spaces, support networks, and legal protections are essential to provide women with recourse against violence and harassment. Equally important is ensuring that these women are aware of their rights and have access to legal assistance when needed. Social empowerment also entails political participation and representation. Engaging backward-class women in local governance, through initiatives such as women's self-help groups or leadership training programs, enables them to advocate for their own needs and shape policies that affect their lives.

Social and cultural empowerment allows backward-class women to envision a life beyond traditional roles, encouraging them to pursue personal goals, participate in public life, and contribute to societal progress. By challenging societal norms and creating supportive structures, we can help backward-class women gain respect, voice, and agency within their communities.

Impact of Government Initiatives and NGOs:

Government initiatives and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a pivotal role in empowering backward-class women in the 21st century, addressing their unique challenges and providing support to break cycles of poverty, social exclusion, and gender-based discrimination. Through targeted policies and community-based programs, both government and NGOs aim to improve access to education, economic opportunities, health, and social justice, enabling backward-class women to achieve greater autonomy and equity in society. One significant impact of government initiatives has been in improving access to education and vocational training for backward-class women. Programs such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter) and scholarships targeted at girls from marginalized communities promote educational enrollment and reduce dropout rates. Such programs encourage families to send girls to school, breaking traditional biases against female education and providing the skills needed for economic self-sufficiency. Additionally, initiatives like Skill India and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) focus on vocational training

and skill development for women, helping them gain employment in formal sectors, reducing their dependency, and enhancing their socio-economic status. Economic empowerment programs are another key area where government schemes have made an impact. Microcredit programs, small business grants, and financial inclusion initiatives, such as those under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM), provide financial support and entrepreneurial resources to women from backward communities. These programs enable women to start small businesses or participate in local markets, promoting economic independence and self-reliance. Furthermore, schemes such as Jan Dhan Yojana, which encourages women to open bank accounts, ensures their financial security and brings them into the formal financial system.

NGOs complement government efforts by addressing gaps and providing grassroots support that aligns with local needs. Many NGOs focus on social awareness, advocating for the rights of backward-class women and educating communities on gender equality, health, and safety. For example, NGOs working in rural India often organize workshops to raise awareness about women's legal rights, such as property inheritance and protection against domestic violence. These organizations also provide safe spaces and counseling services, empowering women to speak up against violence and seek help when necessary. NGOs like SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) also promote economic empowerment by organizing women into self-help groups and cooperatives, offering skill training, and facilitating access to markets. Health initiatives are another critical area where government and NGOs collaborate. Programs focusing on maternal and reproductive health, immunization, and access to affordable healthcare provide backward-class women with essential health services that improve their well-being and enable them to lead healthier lives. Government schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and NGO interventions in health education have helped reduce maternal mortality and improve overall health outcomes for marginalized women. The combined efforts of government initiatives and NGOs create a supportive ecosystem that addresses the multifaceted needs of backward-class women, promoting social inclusion and empowerment. Together, they provide a foundation for sustainable development, empowering women to overcome systemic barriers and lead dignified, independent lives.

Barriers to Empowerment:

Barriers to empowerment for backward-class women are multi-dimensional, encompassing social, economic, educational, cultural, and legal obstacles that restrict their personal growth, independence, and participation in society. These barriers are often interconnected, creating a cycle of disadvantage that makes it challenging for women in marginalized communities to break free from poverty, discrimination, and exclusion. Key barriers to empowerment include:

1. Social and Cultural Constraints

Patriarchal Norms: Traditional gender roles limit women to domestic responsibilities, discouraging them from pursuing education, employment, or leadership roles. These norms restrict women's freedom and perpetuate dependence on male family members.

Caste-based Discrimination: Backward-class women face discrimination based on both gender and caste, leading to exclusion from social and economic opportunities. Caste-based discrimination often isolates them within society, preventing their participation in community and institutional activities.

2. Economic Barriers

Limited Access to Financial Resources: Without collateral, many backward-class women struggle to access credit or loans, which restricts their ability to start businesses or invest in income-generating activities. This financial limitation keeps them reliant on low-paying, unstable jobs.

Unstable Employment: Backward-class women often have limited access to formal employment, leading to low wages and job insecurity. The lack of stable income makes it difficult to achieve financial independence, reducing their ability to improve their socio-economic status.

3. Educational Inequality

Low Literacy Rates: Many backward-class women lack access to quality education due to economic limitations, societal biases, and inadequate infrastructure in rural areas. Low literacy limits their ability to secure well-paying jobs and increases dependency on others.

Lack of Skill Development Opportunities: Vocational and skill training programs are often inaccessible to backward-class women, further hindering their ability to secure skilled jobs or start small

businesses. This lack of skills keeps them in low-paying work and limits their economic empowerment.

4. Health and Safety Challenges

Poor Access to Healthcare: Backward-class women face significant barriers to quality healthcare, especially in rural areas, leading to poor health outcomes. A lack of maternal and reproductive health services reduces their quality of life and impacts their physical and mental well-being.

Safety and Protection Concerns: Many backward-class women experience gender-based violence and harassment, which hinders their social and economic participation. The lack of safe environments limits their freedom and diminishes their sense of security.

5. Legal and Institutional Barriers

Lack of Awareness of Legal Rights: Many women are unaware of legal rights that protect them from discrimination, violence, and exploitation. Without awareness, they are unable to seek recourse against injustices or claim entitlements that could improve their circumstances.

Weak Institutional Support: Policies designed to protect backward-class women are often poorly implemented or difficult to access. Institutional inefficiencies and bureaucratic challenges prevent women from fully benefiting from governmental and non-governmental support systems.

Addressing these barriers requires a holistic approach involving policy reforms, targeted educational and economic programs, and community-level advocacy. Such efforts are essential to breaking down the systemic barriers that limit the empowerment of backward-class women, enabling them to participate fully in society.

Case Studies and Field Observations:

Case studies and field observations offer valuable insights into the lives of backward-class women, highlighting both their struggles and the progress made through empowerment initiatives. Through close observation, it becomes clear how social, cultural, and economic factors interact to shape these women's experiences and their journey toward empowerment. For instance, case studies from rural India show that women who participate in self-help groups (SHGs) gain both financial independence and social confidence. These groups, often

facilitated by NGOs, allow women to pool resources, access microloans, and initiate small businesses, which foster financial independence and community support. Observations reveal that SHG members not only improve their economic situation but also experience a shift in household dynamics, with increased decision-making power and respect.

Field studies also show the importance of educational initiatives in breaking the cycle of poverty and dependence. In communities where girls' education is actively promoted, backward-class women report better job opportunities, improved health, and greater autonomy. These observations underscore the impact of education in transforming mindsets and opening pathways to empowerment, which are otherwise inaccessible due to caste-based exclusion and economic constraints. Additionally, case studies illustrate the critical role of local leadership in driving change. Communities where women leaders emerge from backward classes tend to exhibit greater acceptance of gender equality and female participation in decision-making.

Field observations further reveal barriers, such as resistance to change within patriarchal family structures, that can hinder empowerment efforts. Cases document instances where empowered women face backlash or are discouraged from working outside the home, which underscores the need for community-based awareness campaigns that promote gender equality and supportive environments for women. These insights, gleaned from real-life cases, affirm the importance of targeted, context-sensitive strategies in empowering backward-class women, emphasizing the need for sustained, grassroots-level interventions that address local cultural dynamics and foster lasting social change.

Discussion:

The discussion explores the complex factors influencing the empowerment of backward-class women, examining the impact of socio-economic, educational, and cultural elements. It evaluates the effectiveness of various government and NGO interventions, highlights persistent barriers, and integrates findings from case studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of empowerment challenges and progress.

Question - 1 What are the primary socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers hindering the empowerment of women from backward classes in the 21st century?

Answer: The primary barriers hindering the empowerment of women from backward classes include socio-cultural restrictions, economic disadvantages, and political exclusion. Socially, patriarchal norms and caste-based discrimination limit their access to education, healthcare, and social mobility, often confining them to traditional roles. Economically, they face limited access to financial resources, stable employment, and property rights, making self-sufficiency difficult. Politically, backward-class women are underrepresented, with limited awareness of their rights and inadequate institutional support, reducing their influence in decision-making processes. These intersecting barriers reinforce each other, creating a cycle of marginalization that continues to hinder their empowerment in the 21st century.

Question – 2 How effective have government policies and NGO-led initiatives been in promoting education, healthcare, and economic independence among women from backward classes?

Answer: Government policies and NGO-led initiatives have made notable progress in promoting education, healthcare, and economic independence among women from backward classes, though challenges remain. Programs like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Skill India have improved educational access and vocational training, enabling women to pursue diverse careers. Healthcare initiatives, such as Janani Suraksha Yojana, have enhanced maternal health and access to essential services. NGOs complement these efforts by raising awareness, providing microloans, and forming self-help groups to empower women economically. However, cultural resistance and uneven implementation continue to limit the reach and impact of these programs in marginalized communities.

Question – 3 What role does education play in fostering empowerment and social mobility for women in backward classes?

Answer: Education plays a transformative role in fostering empowerment and social mobility for women in backward classes by providing them with knowledge, skills, and opportunities that challenge traditional social structures. Through education, these women gain awareness of their rights, build self-confidence, and

improve their decision-making abilities, which are critical for personal empowerment. Education also opens pathways to better employment, reducing financial dependence and allowing women to contribute economically to their families and communities. Additionally, educated women tend to advocate for their children's education, creating a positive cycle of empowerment and social mobility that benefits future generations and their communities.

Question – 4 How do women from backward classes perceive empowerment, and what specific forms of support do they identify as most impactful for improving their lives?

Answer: Women from backward classes often perceive empowerment as the ability to make decisions that affect their lives, gain financial independence, and challenge societal norms that limit their opportunities. They identify several forms of support as impactful, including access to education, vocational training, and microfinance. Education helps broaden their horizons, providing the knowledge and skills needed for personal growth and social mobility. Vocational training and skill development enable them to secure stable jobs, improving their economic independence. Additionally, support from self-help groups (SHGs) and NGOs, which offer community-based assistance and advocacy, empowers women by providing financial resources, networking, and a platform for collective action. Legal awareness and protection against violence also emerge as critical forms of support that contribute to their overall well-being and sense of security.

Conclusion:

The empowerment of women from backward classes in the 21st century is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires sustained efforts from both government and non-governmental organizations. Despite facing significant socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers, many backward-class women have made strides toward autonomy and self-sufficiency, largely due to targeted education, skill development programs, and community support initiatives. Government schemes and NGO-led interventions have proven effective in improving access to education, healthcare, and financial resources, which are crucial for empowerment. However, deep-rooted patriarchal norms, caste-based discrimination, and limited access to resources still pose significant challenges. Empowerment, in this

context, is not only about economic independence but also about social recognition, legal protection, and the ability to exercise personal and collective agency. With continued focus on education, legal rights, and community-based support, the potential for greater empowerment and social mobility for backward-class women remains promising in the 21st century.

References:

1. Ahuja, R. (2003). Empowerment and women in India: A critical review of the literature. Social Scientist, 31(3/4), 3-16.
2. Bandyopadhyay, M., & Saha, S. (2018). Women empowerment and socio-economic development of backward classes in rural India. International Journal of Social Sciences, 6(2), 45-59.
3. Dube, S. C. (1994). Indian Society: Then and Now. National Book Trust.
4. Government of India. (2020). National policy for the empowerment of women. Ministry of Women and Child Development. Retrieved from http://wcd.nic.in
5. Kabeer, N. (2005). Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal. Gender and Development, 13(1), 13-24. https://doi.org/10.1080/13552070512331332273
6. Mehta, S., & Gupta, S. (2016). Barriers to empowerment of women in backward classes: Socio-economic and cultural challenges. Journal of Social Change, 22(4), 101-117. https://doi.org/10.1080/20421338.2016.1160554
7. Nussbaum, M. (2000). Women and human development: The capabilities approach. Cambridge University Press.
8. Patil, V. M. (2019). Empowerment of backward-class women through education and economic opportunities. Indian Journal of Social Science Research, 13(2), 213-226.
9. Sharma, S. K., & Khan, F. R. (2017). Gender, caste, and empowerment: Women's progress in backward areas of India. Journal of Women's Studies, 18(2), 56-72.
10. Verma, R. (2018). Social exclusion and empowerment of women from backward classes: A policy perspective. Development Policy Review, 36(5), 681-698. https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12233

3

E-Governance and Women Empowerment in India

Sourav Ghosh

Abstract

E-Governance refers to the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by government agencies to improve the delivery of services, enhance transparency, increase efficiency, and facilitate citizen participation. In other words, E-governance encompasses a wide range of services, including online portals for service delivery, e-voting, e-taxation, digital platforms for legal and health services, and various initiatives aimed at improving governance through technology. It involves the digital interaction between government bodies and citizens, businesses, or other government entities, aiming to make administrative processes more accessible, accountable, and responsive. E-governance in India has emerged as a transformative tool for fostering women's empowerment, particularly by improving access to essential services, enhancing financial inclusion, and promoting gender equality. Through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), various government initiatives have aimed to reduce gender disparities, providing women with easier access to healthcare, education, legal rights, and employment opportunities. Programs like Digital India and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have leveraged digital platforms to enhance women's participation in social, economic, and political spheres. E-governance has facilitated women's access to critical services such as MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) applications, financial assistance through schemes like Jan Dhan Yojana, and educational resources through digital learning platforms such as SWAYAM. Additionally, digital tools have improved women's awareness of their rights and safety, with apps and online portals offering legal support and resources on gender-based violence. However, challenges such as digital illiteracy, limited internet access in rural areas, and concerns about online privacy and security persist, limiting the reach and impact of these initiatives. Despite these barriers,

the potential of e-governance to empower women remains significant and continued efforts to bridge the digital divide, enhance digital literacy, and ensure safe online environments are essential. In this context, my article analyses the nature and scope of E-Governance in India and also discuss how it helpful to women empowerment. This article also explores the intersection of e-governance and women empowerment in India, analysing how digital initiatives have contributed to improving women's lives.

Keywords: *Privacy, security, aspiration, transparency, equality*

Introduction:

It is the buzz-word in the world. E-governance has become popular the world over since mid'1990s. During this time India has made significant strides in leveraging technology to enhance governance through e-governance initiatives. E-governance refers to the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve government services, transparency, and citizen engagement. E-governance is variously defined by different Scholars such as:

The use of ICT to support (inter alia) public services, democracy, the private sector, etc .;

- Technology mediated services;
- Something that includes e-government;
- A model of government;
- A commitment to technology;
- Functions that empower citizens;
- Internally focused use of ICT by government;
- About networks and relationships;
- Use of ICT to improve the quality services and governance;
- Something that enhances e-democracy;
- A technology-mediated relationship between citizen and state.

The World Bank refers to e-governance as the use of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) by the government agencies. In other words, e-governance may be defined as the delivery of government services and information to the public by using electronic means. E-Governance is alternative government. E-Government is government 'anytime, anywhere'. The objective will be to offer all government related services and utilities line. E-Governance is really E-nabled government, E-effective

government and e-xcellent government. In India, e-governance has also played a crucial role in empowering women by providing them access to vital resources, services, and information, thus promoting gender equality and social inclusion.

Scholars mentioned that good governance and E-Governance is related.

The demand for 'good governance'; slogan for 'paperless office'; cry for transparency and death of secrecy and insistence on right to information can give all that stands for good governance and indeed E-Governance is the other name of good governance. So, it is important to know what good governance is. Good, in the context of good governance means those decisions, policies and actions which aim at the welfare of all. Generally, people in favour of democracy, defined as a government of the people by the people and for the people, the 'good, the 'welfare' or 'interest' of the people is assumed to be the necessary condition of good governance. The World Bank, for the first time in 1989 highlighted the concept of good governance. By good governance it meant, sound public management, and in this context, defined four dimensions: (i) public sector management; (ii) accountability; (iii) legal framework for development; and (iv) information and transparency.

E-Governance and Its Role in Empowering Women:

The role of e-governance in women's empowerment can be understood through various dimensions:

Access to Information and Services: E-governance initiatives such as online portals and mobile applications have made it easier for women to access critical information regarding health services, legal rights, education, and financial assistance. For instance, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) portal allows rural women to directly apply for jobs under the scheme, ensuring better access to employment opportunities. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign, aimed at promoting the welfare of the girl child, has been extended through digital platforms to reach a wider audience.

Financial Inclusion: Digital platforms have played a crucial role in promoting financial literacy and inclusion among women. Government programs like Jan Dhan Yojana, which aim to provide banking access to the unbanked, have disproportionately benefited

women, especially in rural areas. These digital banking initiatives provide women with access to savings accounts, insurance, and credit, empowering them economically and reducing their dependence on traditional intermediaries.

Education and Skill Development: E-learning platforms and online education initiatives have empowered women by offering flexible, accessible, and affordable learning opportunities. Programs like SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active–Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) provide women with the chance to gain skills in a variety of fields, from technology to entrepreneurship. These platforms have helped bridge the educational gender gap, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas.

Legal Awareness and Protection: E-governance initiatives have also played a vital role in spreading awareness about women's legal rights. Websites such as the National Commission for Women's (NCW) portal, and the women's safety app developed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, have enabled women to report cases of violence, harassment, and discrimination more efficiently. These initiatives promote women's access to justice, helping in the reduction of gender-based violence.

Challenges and Barriers:

Scholar mentioned that although lots of efforts have been made in the creation of infrastructure and intimal information handling by govt bodies as well as public services, the diffusion of technologies in moving towards e-governance have been rather slow. These reasons are: Lack of IT Literacy and awareness regarding benefits of e-govemance; Underutilization of existing ICT infrastructure; Attitude of Government Departments; Lack of coordination between Govt. Department and Solution developers; Resistance to re-engineering of departmental processes; Lack of Infrastructure for sustaining e-governance.

Again, While e-governance has made substantial progress in empowering women in India, several challenges persist:

Digital Literacy: One of the major barriers to the success of e-governance initiatives for women is the digital literacy gap. According to the National Sample Survey (NSS) data, women in rural areas are less likely to have access to digital devices or the internet. This digital divide limits their ability to benefit from government services provided online.

Cultural and Societal Barriers: In many parts of India, traditional gender roles still restrict women's mobility and access to technology. In conservative communities, women may not be allowed to freely use mobile phones or computers, which hamper their participation in digital initiatives.

Privacy and Security Concerns: Women, especially in rural and underprivileged areas, may face concerns about privacy and the security of their personal data when engaging with online platforms. Cybersecurity risks such as identity theft, cyberbullying, and online harassment can discourage women from fully participating in e-governance initiatives.

Former Indian President Abul Kalam Azad:

"No country has so far implemented an e-governance system for one billion people. It is big challenge before us required e-Governance."

Government Initiatives to Promote E-Governance and Women's Empowerment:

The Indian government has taken several steps to address these challenges and promote e-governance as a tool for women's empowerment:

Digital India Programme: Launched in 2015, the Digital India programme aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society. Under this initiative, the government has worked to increase internet penetration, build digital infrastructure, and provide digital literacy training, with a focus on empowering women and marginalized communities.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme: This initiative promotes gender equality and the empowerment of girls. The campaign has a significant digital presence, with efforts to raise awareness through online platforms, helping to challenge societal norms and provide information on health, education, and safety.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Digital Platforms: The government has also worked to integrate women's self-help groups with digital platforms. Through these platforms, women can access financial services, training programs, and marketing opportunities for their local products, boosting their economic participation.

Conclusion:

E-governance has become a powerful tool for women's empowerment in India by improving access to information, enhancing financial inclusion, promoting education, and ensuring legal protection. While challenges such as digital literacy gaps and cultural barriers remain, the Indian government's efforts to bridge these divides through targeted initiatives like Digital India and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao are making significant progress. However, the continued focus on improving digital literacy, ensuring equitable access to technology, and addressing security concerns is essential for the future success of these initiatives. Empowering women through e-governance will not only promote gender equality but also contribute to the overall development and prosperity of India.

References:

Barthwal , C.P. (July-December, 2003), E-Governance For Good Governance, *The Indian Journal of Political Science,* Vol. 64, No. ¾ pp. 285-308.

Bannister, Frank and Regina Connolly, (Winter 2012), Defining e-Governance, *e-Service Journal ,* Vol. 8, No. 2 , pp. 3-25.

Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India (2021), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme. Retrieved from https: / / wcd.nic.in

Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DEITY), Government of India, (2015). Digital India: A Programme to Transform India. Retrieved from https: / / www.digitalindia.gov.in

National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Government of India. (2019), Digital Literacy in India. Retrieved from https: / / www.mospi.gov.in

Palekar, S. A. (JAN.- MAR., 2010), E-Governance Initiatives in India: An Analytical Study of Karnataka State*, The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 71, No. 1), pp. 85-96.

Saxena, Anupama (Apr.- June, 2005), E-Governance And Good Governance: The Indian Context, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 66, No. 2 pp. 313-328

Sharma, S., & Singh, R. (2020), E-Governance in India: A New Dimension of Women's Empowerment, International Journal of Gender Studies in Development, 12(3), 42-58.

Yadav , Sushma (JULY - SEPT., 2009), Implementing E-Governance in India Exploring the Administrative Reforms Agenda, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 70, No. 3pp. 679-692

4

Empowering Voices: Women in India

Moumita Chatterjee

Abstract

"If you educated a man you educated an individual, however, if you educated a woman you educated a whole family. Women Empowerments means mother India empowered."

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

This is not a novel topic; women's empowerment is an old problem an analysis of the state of women's empowerment is attempted in this paper. It investigates the financial situation of women and their awareness of violence against women in the law. This essay examines how society and the government have worked to give women equal status. The study highlights the relative ignorance of Indian women on their legal rights and social standing. The goal of this study is to assess women's empowerment by increasing their autonomy in decision-making, where women's employment involvement serves as a catalyst. An attempt has been made in this research study to examine the different concerns of discrimination and victimisation of women, which is a setback for social progress and a denial of social and other forms of justice at a significant interest of justice. The study explores the key factors influencing policy and its implementation, identifying areas requiring further research to empower women and maintain gendered power shifts. This study examines women's empowerment in India, focusing on work, education, health, and environmental factors, aiming to identify obstacles and promote gender equality in India's socioeconomic environment. The study concludes that while social media can enhance women's voices, it's crucial to tackle online harassment and foster a safe, inclusive online environment for all users, especially women. The research papers suggest that women's access to education, employment, and better enterprise opportunities are crucial for promoting Women Empowerment.

Keywords: *Women Empowerment, Indian Women financial situation and present status, forms of justice, gender equality, autonomy in decision-making, social media and women's voices.*

Introduction:

Empowerment refers to the increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. As a general definition, Empowerment is a multidimensional process that helps people gain control over their own lives. Women Empowerment is the process and the outcome of the process by which women challenge gender based discrimination in every institution and structures of the society. Swami Vivekananda, quoted that, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved.". Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, said "when women move forward the family moves, the villages move, and the nation move."1 After Independence, Indian women gained significant social and political importance. Despite being ignorant, they organized for gender equality, job opportunities, and reforming existing laws. Despite conservative views, they created a focused consciousness among middle-class and upper middle-class women, spreading to lower political ranks. They are now striving to evolve a new self-concept and identity. Analyzing the women's movement after Independence, including various organizations and schools of thought, is essential for assessing their current position. The impact of social media on women's participation in public discourse, political representation, and activism cannot be overstated. Social media has created a level playing field for women, enabling them to connect with others who share their views, and creating a platform for them to be heard. Modern Indian society often overlooks the role of women in ancient and medieval India, particularly in matters of equality, education, marriage, family life, racial dynamics, religion, and culture. Women in Vedic India were respected authorities, achieving high levels of intelligence and spirituality, and held a high regard for their homeland. In Vedic India, women held a position of respected authority, particularly in social and religious spheres, despite having limited privileges in politics and economics. Contrary to the belief that they were inferior to men, women were regarded as equals. The concept of "Bharat Mata" and the phrase "Vande Mataram" reflect the deep reverence for the homeland, highlighting the connection between nationalism and the respect for one's country.

Paper's scope and objective :

This study investigates women's empowerment in India, with an emphasis on job, education, health, and environmental issues. The goal is to uncover barriers and promote gender equality in India's socioeconomic environment. This paper looks at the efforts made by the government and society to grant women equal status. The report emphasises how little Indian women know about their legal rights and social status. With women's employment involvement acting as a catalyst, the study aims to evaluate women's empowerment through increased autonomy in decision-making. This research study aims to investigate the various issues of discrimination and victimisation of women, which is detrimental to social progress and a denial of social and other kinds of justice at a critical juncture. In order to empower women and sustain gendered power shifts, the study examines the major elements impacting policy and its execution, highlighting areas that need more investigation. According to the study's findings, social media may help women's voices be heard, but it's also critical to address online abuse and create a welcoming, safe atmosphere for all users—especially women. According to the study articles, women's empowerment depends on their ability to access greater business prospects, education, and jobs.

1. Meaning of Women Empowerment. 2. Indian Women financial situation and present status. 3.Gender equality and autonomy in decision-making. 4.This study holds significant importance in understanding the transformative impact of social media on women's empowerment. 5. To prepare women to raise voice against domestic violence, sexual harassment, and social evil. 6. To offer useful suggestions in the light of Findings.

Methodology :

The study employs a mixed-method approach, combining a comprehensive literature review with data analysis. Data sources include academic papers, case studies and reports. Analysis involves qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a holistic view.

Women Empowerment: Women empowerment involves gaining more power and control over their lives, aiming to narrow the gender gap and create an equal playing field. This multi-faceted concept involves various factors and is associated with women's struggle for social justice and equality. Empowerment promotes women's inherent

strength and positive self-image, not overpowering men. Power, decision-making skills, and transformation are all that are important. It is a transformational process that gives weaker people and groups the opportunity to make choices that will impact their life. The phrase "women's empowerment" refers to empowering women to understand their rights and fulfill their responsibilities to others and to themselves. Sayulu, Sardar, and Sridevi (2005) have asserted, "Women empowerment is any process that provides greater autonomy to women through the sharing of relevant information and provision of control over factors affecting their performance".2 Empowerment empowers women over material possessions, intellectual property, and ideologies, eliminates gender-based discrimination, and allows them to participate in national and international policy processes. Empowerment also leads to equal status and a greater sense of authenticity in all aspects of life.Equal status is another aspect of women's empowerment.Women's liberation takes place on a number of levels, including the individual, group, institutional, cultural, family, societal, and economic levels. Once a woman becomes financially independent and can exercise her choices, she can also help her mother, sister, daughter, and other women in the society to become empowered. This will elevate women's position in the society and will bring in equality.When a woman makes a crucial decision, she feel empowered.

Context of india Women Empowerment :

India's women empowerment is crucial for socio-economic development and achieving its goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047.3 Factors such as education, social status, age, and geographical location influence women's empowerment. Addressing gender inequalities and removing illiteracy, dowry, ignorance, and economic slavery is essential. Today, women have a voice in daily life, business , and politics. Implementing a policy framework, raising civic awareness, and educating women about empowerment can help eradicate women's plight in India. This includes granting balanced rights and ensuring their rightful participation in the workforce.India's women's empowerment is vital for gender equality, with NGOs like Mahila Housing Trust implementing initiatives and advocating for policy changes, highlighting their localized approach and community engagement in promoting gender equality.

Indian women financial situation and present status :

Indias Total population is 142.86 crores (2023).India 2024 population is estimated at 1,450,95,791 people at mid year. India population is equivalent to 17.78% of the total world population. The female population of India in 2024 is estimated to be 48.4% of the total population, or around 698 million people. sex ratio is 106.5 males for every 100 females. Males make up 51.56% of the population, while females are 48. 44%. The Male-Female gap at the all-India level is 12.9% points with male literacy at 84.7% and female literacy at 70.3%.4

Economic independence of women in India :

The labor force participation rate (LFPR) for women in India was 41.7% between July 2023 and June 2024. This is a significant increase from 23.3% in 2017-18. Credit received by women is only 27 per cent of the deposits they contribute, while the credit received by men is 52 per cent of their deposits. Women accounted for nearly 51% of employable people in India in 2024. The participation rate of women in the organized sector increased from 33% in 2023 to 36% in 2024. The LFPR in rural areas increased from 50.7% in 2017-18 to 63.7% in 2023-24. The LFPR in urban areas increased from 47.6% to 52.0%.5 The landscape of financial inclusivity in India is witnessing a transformative shift. According to the Inclusive Finance Report 2023, for every 100 men who have a bank account or a formal financial account of any kind, there are 103 women with similar accounts. The report highlights significant strides towards gender parity in access to financial services, with the gender gap in credit access showing a notable decrease. At a basic level, financial independence makes women feel more secure and respected irrespective of their socio-economic background. This automatically has a relay effect not just on women but their families, society, and the country at large. More financially independent women mean a more progressive society that is healthier.

Why Every Woman Should Be Financially Independent -

1. The power to choose: Being financially independent gives you the power to take independent decisions.
2. Boosts self confidence: Being able to support yourself financially boosts morale & also commands respect and equality in both professional & personal relationships.

3. To pre-empt emergencies: It prepares you for a contingency that might result due to divorce, sudden demise, unemployment or illness of a spouse.
4. To meet rising cost: The dependence on one family member is reduced which helps in managing everyday expenses better & help meet the family's financial goals.
5. Be a role model: A financially independent woman breaks down gender biases and motivates everyone to be self sufficient.

Financial independance important for women because : Financial literacy among women, Financial independence of women, Higher self-respect, Better living standards, Higher financial security, Less prone to discrimination,Higher GDP, Progressive society, Less gender bias, safer and healthier society. Majority of women aged more than 45 years have financial independence.6

Indian women present status: women in India still face significant challenges. Gender discrimination, violence against women and unequal pay continue to be major issues. Female foeticide and infanticide, particularly in rural areas, remain a significant concern. Women's safety and security are also a significant issue, with many incidents of sexual harassment and assault reported each year. Legal Rights for women in India Women in India have been granted various legal rights over the years to promote gender equality and protect their interests.There has been a significant increase in the number of women participating in the workforce, and women have achieved high positions in various fields, including politics, business, and entertainment.

The status of women in India is complex, with both progress and challenges. Here are some of the challenges and issues that women in India face:

1. Low workforce participation: Women's participation in the workforce has decreased from 30% in 1990 to 19% in 2021.7
2. Gender inequality: The World Inequality Report 2022 stated that men receive 82% of the labor income in India, while women receive 18%. 8
3. Safety: Women face safety challenges in public, including groping, eve teasing, molestation, and rape.

4. Patriarchal views: Many women and girls in India do not fully enjoy their rights due to patriarchal views, norms, traditions, and structures.
5. Child marriage: 25% of women marry before the age of 15, often against their will.
6. Acid attacks: The number of acid attacks has been rising in recent years.
7. Dowry: The dowry problem is a dangerous issue in India, with parents of girls paying thousands to the bridegrooms and their families.

According to The Hindu, over 92% of women in India engage in unpaid domestic work. This highlights the importance of financial literacy not only in managing the household effectively but also in making informed decisions.9

Crimeagainst women in india:At 5.4%sexual harassment, Molestation 19%, Cruelty by relatives and husbands 43.9%, Rape 10.5%, Kidnapping & abduction 12.6%, Dowry death 4.1%, Others 0.4%, Immoral Traffic (P) 1.2% , 5% women slapped, kicked, beaten, 75% battered women try to commit suicide, 55% women perceive violence normal part of their marriages.10

India's financial landscape is changing, but there are still financial disparities between men and women. While women own a third of bank accounts in India, they only have 20.8% of the total money deposited in those accounts.80% of Indian women struggle with financial literacy. Working women tend to be risk-averse, and invest 51% of their money in fixed deposits and savings accounts.Women tend to have less wealth than men because they are less likely to reach higher-paid positions. Women are often responsible for childcare and household chores, which can limit their time in employment.

some women empowerment schemes in India: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Scheme for Adolescent Girls, Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK), UJJAWALA, Lakpati Didi, One Stop Centre Scheme, Women Helpline Scheme, Working Women Hostel , NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR, Mahila police Volunteers, NIRBHAYA .Today, women are tending towards the social issues and making their best to change the social stature of women at large.

Women at decision making level in india:

Women's participation in decision-making is vital for a country's development and standardization. It leads to positive transformations in society, including changes in laws, policies, services, and social norms. Ensuring women's equal power and representation in decision-making processes improves their quality of life and represents a diverse range of people and communities. Participate of women in elections increased over the year.The all-India voter turnout was 65.78 per cent for women.The percentage of women voters in the total electorate increased from 48.1 per cent to 48.7 per cent between 2019 and 2024. The number of women contesting general elections has increased from 2.9 per cent in 1957 to nearly 10 per cent in 2024. In 2024, the Government of India has a number of initiatives to encourage women's participation in the Panchayati Raj system.The Government of India is inviting around 400 Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) and Elected Representatives (ERs) to the 78th Independence Day celebrations at Red Fort, Delhi on August 15, 2024. As of January 2024, only 13.4% of judges in the High Court and 9.3% judges in the Supreme Court are women.11

Women's involvement in decision-making is crucial for the following reasons: 1. It can result in improvements to institutions, laws, policies, services, and social norms. 2. It can enhance women's, their families', and the community's quality of life. 3. It can assist in integrating the viewpoints and demands of women into governance. 4. It can support the development of gender-sensitive policies and equal opportunity.

Gender Equality and Justice : First and foremost, gender equality is a human right. It suggests that boys and girls, women, and men of all colours and classes engage as equals and are equally valuable. They have equal access to resources, liberties, and control-exercising opportunities.India has made progress in gender equality, but there are still many challenges.India's rank on the GII has improved over the years, from 127 in 2014 to 108 in 2022. Women's representation in politics is low, with women holding only 14.7% of seats in parliament as of 2024. 12

Gender-based violence, such as spousal violence, physical violence during pregnancy, and sexual violence, is still prevalent. Gender equality in India is a key to societal success and women's rights, often necessitating policy changes and is a secret mantra for the nation's

long-term success. While Indian laws on rape, dowry, and adultery have women's safety at heart, many highly discriminatory practices are still occurring at an alarming rate. Gender Equality in India is the most desired state of the form to achieve other goals for its development.Achieving gender equality requires women's empowerment to ensure that decision-making at personal and public levels and access to resources is not only in men's favor.

Every woman and girl has the right to live in dignity, freedom, and without fear; gender justice is a human right. In order to reduce poverty and promote development, gender justice is essential to achieving human progress.Gender justice and women's empowerment are related because women's empowerment is a fight for equality and social justice. Giving women more authority over their own lives, resources, and decision-making is known as women's empowerment. The fight against sex or gender-based discrimination and inequality is known as gender justice.

NEED OF EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY :

The Indian women are still crying for simple justice. Which is not even allowed to have bee accessed to them. About 66% of the female is unutilized. In agriculture & animal care the women contribute 90% of the total work force. Women , perform nearly 2/3rd of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world's income & own less than 1/100th of the worldproperty. 70% of people living in poverty are women.Some indian eye opener facts is 60% of the Girls are married before the age of 16 and they bear children before they are 18. 125,000 women die from pregnancy and related causes every year,37% women victims of domestic violence on NFH survey report.

Social media and Women's voices in India:

Social media has made it possible for women in India to campaign for gender equality, share their stories, and foster a sense of unity among women in various cultures and geographical areas. The degree to which social media is elevating women's voices, however, is still up for discussion and research. Social media has emerged as a potent instrument for women's advocacy and empowerment in a society like India, where discrimination and gender inequity are pervasive. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are being used by women from all walks of life to voice their thoughts, campaign for change, and increase awareness of gender-based violence. To express their stories and come together against the patriarchal system that

has kept them silent for millennia, they are using hashtags like #Me Too,#TimesUp and #NotAllMen.Social media has boosted women's representation and equality, allowing them to connect with others who share their views. However, it also presents challenges like harassment, trolling, and online abuse, which hinder their participation and representation. The anonymity of the internet and lack of regulation make it difficult for women to seek justice.The use of social media as a platform for women's voices to be heard and amplified has created both challenges and opportunities for women in advocating for gender equality.

India's social media has significantly impacted women's empowerment, with over 500 million internet users and one of the largest online populations globally. Women, who make up nearly half of the country's online population, use social media to express themselves, challenge stereotypes, and demand greater representation in public life. However, challenges include harassment, self-censorship, and marginalization. The digital gender gap in India further hinders women's participation in public discourse. Despite these challenges, social media has the potential to be a powerful tool for women's empowerment in India. By creating inclusive and safe online spaces, women can become agents of change, contributing to gender equality and social justice. The analysis of female and male users on various social media platforms reveals that Snapchat and Pinterest have the highest female user percentages, followed by Instagram at 58%. Facebook and Twitter have more balanced gender distributions, while LinkedIn and YouTube have lower percentages. YouTube has the closest gender balance, with only a slight majority of male users. Understanding these gender disparities is crucial for understanding social media's impact on empowering women. Trending hashtags in social media campaigns have significantly raised women's issues, mobilizing public opinion, and urging policymakers to take action. Examples is #MeToo, #JusticeForAsifa, #PeriodsAreNotAnInsult and #SheInspiresUs. Social media has significantly boosted women's voices and advocated for gender equality, leading to campaigns like #MeToo and campaigns against gender-based violence and discrimination. Social media has the potential to be a powerful tool for creating a more just and equal society.13

: International Women's Day, celebrated on 8th March, is a global day to honor and respect women. However, in a gender-based society, ensuring gender parity is challenging. Women deserve equal

opportunities and benefits, including proper education, employment, and access to public spaces. Empowering women is essential for promoting equality and ensuring women's rights and equal opportunities.

Ways to empower women are:

1. ENSURE WOMEN'S SAFETY: Women face daily violence and assault, with no safe haven in homes or offices.
2. EDUCATION: Education is crucial for a brighter future, and responsible citizens should teach all girls.
3. HEALTHCARE: Health care should focus on creating a safe environment for women, including regular check-ups. Saving a girl is essential, as many girls are killed before birth.
4. SAVE A GIRL: Saving a girl is essential, as many girls are killed before birth.
5. TEACH JOB SKILL: Teaching small skills can help women start a career, and raising one's voice against gender inequality is essential.
6. RAISE YOUR VOICE AGAINST GENDER INEQUALITY: By doing so, we can work towards a more inclusive society where women can thrive and contribute to a better future.14
7. In order to inform women—especially those who are members of marginalized groups—about their rights, awareness campaigns must be established.
8. Since women's education is the primary cause of the issue, it is crucial to give it top priority. This emphasizes how important it is to give women's education first priority.
9. Strictly enforced policies and initiatives are essential to eliminating the widespread negative behaviors in society.
10. Women should be able to work and be provided with the support and safeguards they need to do so. If we wish to see women's status in society improve, we must ensure that they receive equal compensation and treatment in the workplace.15
11. Encourage digital literacy programs,Foster inclusive online communities,Amplify diverse voices,Support online mentorship programs,Facilitate online activism and advocacy.

12. Promote positive role models,Enhance digital security measures,Support online entrepreneurship,Foster collaborations with women's organizations and Promote digital well-being.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the status of women in India has improved significantly in recent years, but there is still a long way to go. It is essential to recognize the achievements made so far and continue to work towards a more equitable and just society for women. By addressing the challenges that women in India face and promoting gender equality, we can ensure that women can fully participate in all aspects of life and contribute to the development of the country. Empowering girls through education, equal opportunities in all fields, and eliminating child marriage is crucial. Despite women's increased independence, societal issues like child marriage and gender discrimination persist. Government institutions and society must adopt new attitudes to make women's empowerment a reality. The study highlights the need for holistic approaches to women's empowerment in India, including eliminating structural barriers to education, promoting inclusive economic opportunities, ensuring adequate healthcare, and challenging discriminatory societal conventions. Implementing policy interventions and legislative reforms can help achieve inclusive growth and sustainable development.These days, Indian women believe they have their own uniqueness, personality, self-worth, ability, and efficiency.By leveraging resources and support, we can accelerate this process, empowering women with the financial knowledge needed for a secure future. Many Indian women have shown they can fulfill responsibilities as well as men when given equal opportunities. India, historically neglecting women, now recognizes the importance of gender equality. The Indian Constitution guarantees women equal rights without discrimination. Despite progress, women face new challenges in a changing socio-political landscape, experiencing new stresses and strains in their lives.Gender Equality in India is the secret for all upheld success that our Nation deserves in the long run. Gender equality in India is the secret mantra for achieving the desired state of the Nation. In conclusion, social media has developed into a potent tool for women to express themselves, giving them a forum to connect, be heard, and bring about change. We may endeavor to create a culture that is more equitable and inclusive for everyone if we keep researching and comprehending

the ways that social media supports women. India needs its women in order to achieve its goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047. Through a variety of developmental initiatives, efforts are being made to guarantee women's full and comprehensive development and involvement. A mother, a woman, is the source of a kid; she teaches a man the value of giving, caring, and loving. That's what women are all about.

REFERENCES:

1. Mahato,A.,& Barman, P.(2020, February).Women Education and Empowerment in India. *EmpyrealPublishingHouse*,1- 6.https: / / www.researchgate.net / publication / 344211713 Women Education and Empowerment in India
2. Thanavathi,c.(2018,December).Status of Modern Women in India.*V.L.Media Solutions PublishingHouse,* https: / / www.researchgate.net / publication / 337991629 Status of Modern Women in India
3. Dar,A.S., & Debbarma,A.(2023,January).UNLEASHING HER VOICE: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA EMPOWERS WOMEN. *International Journal of Information Management,*8(2),7-14. https: / / www.researchgate.net / publication / 371987845 UNLEASHING HER VOICE HOW SOCIAL MEDIA EMPOWERS WOMEN
4. Cornwall, A. (2016). Women's empowerment: What works?. *Journal of International Development*, 28(3), 342-359.
5. Bavarava, A.(2024,February).Empowering Women in India: A Comprehensive Study.*An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal,*9(4),1-8.www.vidhyayanaejournal.org
6. Rahman, T.(2020).Women Empowerment.*Empyreal Publishing House,*1-6.https: / / www.empyreal publishing house.com > ... PDF Women Empowerment
7. Babbar, J.(2022).Women Empowerment.Research Journal of English (RJOE),7(1),118-120.https: / / www.rjoe.org.in
8. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.(2023).Women and Men in India,2023 Participation in Decision Making. https: / / www.mospi.gov.in /

FOOTNOTES

1. Bhardwaj,M.(2018,october).WomenEmpowerment[PowerpointSlide].https: / / www.slideshare.net / slideshow / women-empowermentppt / 120916242

2 Bavarava, A.(2024,February).Empowering Women in India: A Comprehensive Study.*An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal*,9(4),1-8.www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

3. Chahal Academy.(n.d.).Status of Women in Society. Retrived December 4, 2024,from https: / / chahalacademy.com / status-of-women-in india#:~:text= Women%20 face%20a%20 number%20 of,and%20 decision%2 Dmaking%20 positions%20etc

4. Kingdon,G.(2002, February)The Gender Gap in Educational Attainment in India: How Much Can Be Explained?. *The Journal of Development Studies*,39(2),25-53.https: / / www.researchgate.net / publication / 24083932 The Gender Gap in Educational Attainment in India How Much Can Be Explained

5. Ministry of Labour & Employment.(2024).Enhanced Female Workforce Participation in Economic Activity: Data Shows Improved Employment Indicators over Last Six Years.Retrived December 4, 2024,fromhttps: / / pib.gov.in / Press ReleaseI frame Page.aspx?PRID=2074399

6. Women's Web.(2021,January 25).True Financial independance for women.Retrived December 4,2024,from https: / / www.womensweb.in / 2015 / 05 / true-financial-independence-for-women / ?utm_source=WWFB

7. Vidya, S.(2023, March 8).India is prospering, but its women are leaving the workforce. Business Today. https: / / www.businesstoday.in /

8. Kelp Blog .(2024, February 9).Decoding the Gender Pay Gap in India. Retrived December 6, 2024, from https: / / www.kelphr.com / blogs / gender-pay-gap-in-india / #:~:text= According%20 to%20 the%20 World%20 Inequality, and%20 perpetuating%20 traditional%20 gender%20 roles

9. Bhujang,V.(2024,September 22).Financial Literacy of Women in India.*Girl Power Talk*.Retrived December 6, 2024, from https: / / girlpowertalk.com / financial-literacy-of-women-in-india /

10. Sharada.(2013).VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN[Power point slide].https: / / www.slideshare.net / slideshow / violence-against-women-19862686 / 19862686

11. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.(2023).Women and Men in India,2023 Participation in Decision Making. https: / / www.mospi.gov.in /

12. Ministry of Women and Child Development.(2024,March 14).Nari Shakti strides forward. Retrived December 6, 2024, from https: / / pib.gov.in / PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2014513#:~:text=This%20shows%20a%20significant%20jump,which%20now%20has%20become%20108.

13. Dar, A.S., & Debbarma, A. (2023, January). UNLEASHING HER VOICE: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA EMPOWERS WOMEN. *International Journal of Information Management,* 8(2), 7-14. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371987845 UNLEASHING HER VOICE HOW SOCIAL MEDIA EMPOWERS WOMEN

14. Babbar, J. (2022). Women Empowerment. *Research Journal of English (RJOE),* 7(1), 118-120. https://www.rjoe.org.in

15. Bavarava, A. (2024, February). Empowering Women in India: A Comprehensive Study. *An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal*, 9(4), 1-8. www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

5

Intersectional Analysis of Rural Housing and Gender Equality

Goutam Kumar Shaw

Abstract

This study undertakes an intersectional analysis of rural housing and gender equality in West Bengal, India, exploring how rural housing policies impact women, especially marginalized groups. In rural West Bengal, housing is not only a fundamental need but also a gateway to social security, dignity, and economic stability. However, access to housing is often affected by intersecting factors like gender, caste, economic class, and marital status, which shape the experiences of rural women disproportionately. Using an intersectional framework, this research examines the challenges and barriers that women from diverse social backgrounds face in accessing rural housing schemes and investigates the impact of housing ownership on women's empowerment, financial independence, and community status.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from government housing schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) with qualitative insights from interviews with female beneficiaries, policymakers, and community leaders. Findings indicate that while housing policies have positively impacted women in rural West Bengal, structural inequalities limit the reach and effectiveness of these programs for marginalized groups. Women from lower castes, single mothers, and widows often face systemic biases that hinder their access to housing resources, perpetuating cycles of poverty and social exclusion. The study concludes by recommending policy reforms to address these intersectional barriers, including gender-sensitive targeting, enhanced legal frameworks for women's property rights, and community-driven approaches to ensure equitable access. This research underscores the need for intersectional awareness in rural housing

policies to foster gender equality and social inclusion in West Bengal's rural areas.

Keywords: *Women Empowerment, Gender Equality, Rural Housing, PMAY-G*

Introduction

Housing is a critical component of socioeconomic development and a catalyst for achieving gender equality. For rural women in India, housing represents more than shelter; it offers security, dignity, and a foundation for economic participation. Despite this, access to secure housing remains inequitable, particularly for women from marginalized groups.

India's rural housing policies, including flagship programs like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and Indira Awaas Yojana, have sought to address housing shortages and uplift vulnerable populations. However, the intersection of gender with caste, class, and geography often shapes how these benefits are distributed.

This paper examines rural housing schemes through an intersectional lens, exploring how gender equality is influenced by the interplay of social identities. It highlights the role of Gram Panchayats in implementing housing schemes and identifies systemic barriers to achieving inclusive outcomes. The findings aim to inform policy design and foster equitable development.

Rural Housing and Development:

Rural housing has been a central focus of India's development policies, recognizing its role in improving living standards and reducing poverty. The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) introduced gender-sensitive provisions, mandating joint ownership or exclusive ownership by women in many cases. Bhattacharya (2018) emphasizes the transformative potential of such policies but notes challenges in their implementation, including bureaucratic inefficiencies and local power dynamics.

Gender and Housing:

Women's ownership of housing has been linked to improved decision-making power, enhanced safety, and greater participation in economic activities. Secure housing reduces vulnerability to domestic violence and ensures a stable environment for children. However, patriarchal norms often prevent women from accessing property

rights, particularly in rural areas where traditional inheritance laws dominate.

Intersectional Perspectives:

The concept of intersectionality highlights how multiple identities—such as caste, class, and gender—combine to produce unique experiences of oppression and privilege. For Dalit and tribal women, access to housing is further limited by systemic discrimination. Studies reveal that policies designed to promote gender equality often fail to account for these intersecting identities, resulting in uneven outcomes.

Methodology:

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative analysis. Interviews were conducted with rural housing beneficiaries, Gram Panchayat representatives, and policymakers to gather insights into the lived experiences of women. Government reports and data from housing schemes were analyzed to assess the extent of gendered impacts.

Findings and Discussion

Gender Equality and Housing Ownership:

The inclusion of women as primary beneficiaries in rural housing schemes has had transformative effects. In states like Kerala, where joint ownership is actively encouraged, women reported increased participation in household decision-making and greater financial independence. For many, housing provided a sense of security, reducing their reliance on male relatives.

However, the benefits were not uniform. In patriarchal regions, male family members often exert control over the property despite it being registered in a woman's name. This underscores the need for deeper cultural change to complement policy interventions.

Challenges in Implementation: Despite the promise of rural housing schemes, several challenges persist:

Patriarchal Norms: In many villages, women face societal resistance to owning property, with male relatives often acting as gatekeepers.

Caste-Based Exclusion: Dalit and tribal women face additional barriers due to entrenched social hierarchies, which limit their access to government resources.

Bureaucratic Inefficiencies: Delays in fund disbursement and corruption often hinder the timely completion of housing projects, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups.

Role of Gram Panchayats:

Gram Panchayats play a crucial role in the implementation of rural housing schemes. In regions where Panchayats adopted gender-sensitive approaches, women reported better access to housing benefits. For example, in Odisha, community engagement programs led by Panchayat leaders helped raise awareness about women's property rights.

However, not all Gram Panchayats prioritize inclusivity. Structural inequalities within local governance often result in uneven distribution of benefits. Strengthening the capacity of Panchayats to address these disparities is essential.

Intersectionality in Practice:

Case studies reveal that caste and class intersect with gender to shape access to housing. In Rajasthan, Dalit women reported being side lined in housing allotments despite qualifying under the scheme. In contrast, tribal women in Kerala benefitted from targeted interventions that addressed both gender and ethnic disparities.

These findings highlight the importance of adopting an intersectional approach in policy design to ensure that no group is left behind.

Policy Implications:

1. **Incorporating Intersectionality:**

Rural housing schemes must account for the intersecting identities of beneficiaries. Targeted support for Dalit and tribal women is essential to address systemic barriers.

2. **Capacity Building for Gram Panchayats:**

Training programs should equip Panchayat leaders with the skills to implement gender-sensitive policies and promote equitable resource distribution.

3. **Community Participation:**

Involving women and marginalized groups in the design and monitoring of housing schemes can ensure that policies reflect their needs and priorities.

4. Addressing Cultural Norms:

Awareness campaigns and legal reforms are needed to challenge patriarchal norms and secure women's property rights in practice.

Conclusion:

Rural housing schemes have the potential to transform gender relations and promote socioeconomic equity. However, achieving these goals requires a nuanced understanding of how intersecting identities shape access and outcomes. While initiatives like PMAY represent significant progress, systemic barriers persist, particularly for women from marginalized communities.

An Intersectional approach to policy design and implementation can help bridge these gaps, ensuring that rural housing serves as a tool for Inclusive and equitable development. By strengthening local governance, promoting community participation, and addressing cultural norms, India can harness the full potential of rural housing to achieve gender equality and social justice.

References:

1. Bhattacharya, S. (2018). "Rural Housing in India: A Study of the Role of Gram Panchayats." This paper explores the intersection of rural housing, governance, and gender roles in India.
2. Agarwal, B. (1994). "A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia." Cambridge University Press.
3. Rai, S. M., & Waylen, G. (2013). "New Frontiers in Feminist Political Economy." Routledge.
4. Sahu, B. K., & Kumar, R. (2015). "Housing for All: Policies, Challenges, and Strategies in India." Journal of Rural Development.
5. Chen, M. A. (1995). "A Matter of Survival: Women's Right to Housing in South Asia." Development in Practice.
6. UN-Habitat (2018). "Gender Equality and Urban Housing: The Role of Inclusive Housing Policies."
7. Mehrotra, S. T. (2014). "Housing and Empowerment: Indian Women in the Context of Rural Schemes." Gender and Development Studies.
8. Desai, S. & Joshi, O. (2019). "Caste, Gender, and Housing Inequality in India." Population and Development Review.
9. Kabeer, N. (2005). "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal." Gender and Development.
10. Government of India (2020). "Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G): Gender Perspective." Ministry of Rural Development.

6

Prevention and Remedies of Bhopal Gas Accident in Women's Society: A Historical Review

Anjan Ghosh

Abstract

In the late night of December 3, 1984, a terrible industrial accident took place in Bhopal. which made the whole world, including India, stand in front of a terrible question mark. The world's worst industrial disaster happened that night in a chemical pesticide factory in Bhopal. About 41 tons of toxic methyl isocyanate was released from the factory's tanks into the city's air, exposing 65 per cent of Bhopal's then 10 lakh population. As a result of this tragedy, the most terrible wound in women's society was created in the psychological world. In the immediate phase, the people who lost their loved ones may have thought that if the situation was right, everything would be sorted out again, but unfortunately, the women in the gas-affected areas never became anyone's loved ones in many cases. Many people in Bhopal and surrounding areas of Madhya Pradesh still refuse to marry women from gas-affected areas, fearing that future generations may be crippled. Even if they are married, if they do not give birth to a child after the marriage, or if they give birth to a deformed child, these women are subjected to extreme mental and physical abuse. Faced with thousands of odds, the women of Bhopal continue to play an important role in demanding justice and environmental redress. The fight for justice has continued for decades as women have been at the forefront of activism for remedies, to end this situation. For example, Rachna Dhingra, Kavita Naik, Imtiaz Begum, Rashida Banu, etc. are the personalities whose names are specially mentioned. A part of the women society of Bhopal is challenging the difficult physical conditions and challenging the economic plight of the family and dreaming of spending the coming days well, on the other hand, some noble women wishing for the well-being of poor Bhopal residents

have embarked on a struggle to get all kinds of facilities from the government.

Keywords: *Bhopal, Women, MIC, Government, Effect*

On the night of December 3, 1984, a terrible industrial accident took place in Bhopal, a small city full of natural beauty in the heart of India, which made the whole world, including India, stand in front of a terrible question mark. The worst industrial disaster in the world happened that night in a chemical pesticide factory in Bhopal. About 41 tonnes of toxic methyl isocyanate was released from the factory's tanks into the city's air, exposing 65 per cent of Bhopal's then 10 lakh population. About 2,500 people died that night, but as the months passed; the number of people who died gruesomely increased. The current statistics available based on the valid claims of the family members are that about 22 thousand people died due to the poisonous gas. About 550,000 people became ill to varying degrees, resulting in many crippled lives later on. Hundreds of people became permanently disabled. However, women were the most affected by this accident. Women became barren due to the chemical effects of the poisonous gas. Pregnant women are still giving birth to premature babies under the curse of methyl isocyanate. As a result, they are subjected to physical and mental torture in various ways Being a victim. Hundreds of children are born with disabilities and physical handicaps.

The women who were directly exposed to the gas during the accident but did not die faced various adversities afterwards. Some have lost their eyesight gradually, while others have developed cancer. The respiratory problems became such that they could never do any heavy work afterwards1. Most of the people who lived around Union Carbide were ordinary working people, who made a living through manual labour. But due to heavy work, respirator problems appeared and their livelihood was cut off for life. About two and a half lakh people have to receive medical services periodically due to the long- term effects of toxic gases on the body. Calling this industrial accident one of the world's largest industrial disasters, the curse of methyl isocyanate gas continues into future generations, with an end still unknown to medical science. Besides, the waste management of the Union Carbide factory located in Bhopal city has caused huge damage to the ecosystem 2. Ground floor drinking water has been poisoned, with numerous radioactive toxins entering the body by drinking it.

The industrial accident of December 1984 brought such a curse to the lives of the women of Bhopal city that not only the immediate but also the future days of the suffering caused by methyl isocyanate

could not be removed. Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is toxic to the human body Initiated 25 research projects to study gas. According to the ICMR report, in 1984, the total estimated population affected by poisonous gas was 5 lakh 21 thousand 62, out of which the number of women was about 2 lakh3. In later years, babies born to women exposed to the gas were also born with varying degrees of illness. The results of some reports of the Indian Council of Medical Research on the health status of directly or indirectly affected persons are discussed below-

Toxic gases from Union Carbide's factories mix into the bloodstream, affecting the lungs, kidneys and brain the most. In addition, survivors who inhaled toxic methyl isocyanate had severe reproductive and immune system damage. According to an ICMR report, after the disaster, 98.9 of the patients treated in a government hospital suffered from respiratory problems, 85.8 people suffered from eye problems, 91 people had gas-related tantric problems, and at least 16 other complications were seen in varying degrees. Also, when the ICMR report was published in late 1992, it was found that problems such as irregular periods, spontaneous abortions, hormonal problems, organ failure etc. were particularly noted among women4. According to a 1985 report by the Indian Council of Medical Research, chromosomal aberrations were observed in a large proportion of people, which were enough to seriously affect the next generation. In addition, pulmonary fibrosis was observed in 22.6% of people exposed to the gas, as well as nervous depression, anxiety and depression 5. The reason for presenting the above overall information is that if you look at the overall documentary aim, it can be understood that although the majority of the total population was male, most of the female community living in Bhopal at that time was affected by this methyl isocyanate gas. Women's society was greatly affected at every level, physical, mental, and economic.

Immediate impact: On December 3, 1984, the night of Bhopal

The Union Carbide factory released poisonous gas that night, affecting thousands of residents living in the vicinity of the factory. Women had to face terrible horrors like breathing problems, burning eyes and burning skin. Although the immediate impact was similar for both men and women, the long-term impact on women's society was dire.

Long-term Impact: Decades after the Bhopal gas accident, subsequent surveys show that women in Bhopal continue to struggle with serious health problems. Complications such as respiratory problems, chronic illnesses and reproductive problems continue to this day. Since women are the only race in this world capable of reproduction, the future generation's well-being has also been affected by the curse of the Bhopal gas accident.

Women who were pregnant at the time of the Bhopal gas accident were later found to have given birth to babies with varying degrees of illness. Even this matter has not stopped until now; even today, if you walk around the alleys of Bhopal, you can see unknown, immature, deformed children wandering around in a scattered manner. The stark reality is that mothers exposed to toxic gases give birth prematurely or give birth to and still give birth to stillbirths and physically underdeveloped children; they are subjected to considerable social stigma because of this.

As a result of this tragedy, the most terrible wound in women's society was created in the psychological world. In the immediate phase, the people who lost their loved ones may have thought that if the situation was right, everything would be sorted out again, but unfortunately, the women in the gas-affected areas never became anyone's loved ones in many cases. Many people in Bhopal and surrounding areas of Madhya Pradesh still refuse to marry women from gas-affected areas, fearing that future generations may be crippled. Even if they are married, if they do not give birth to a child after the marriage, or if they give birth to a deformed or deformed child, these women are subjected to extreme mental and physical abuse6. Faced with thousands of odds, the women of Bhopal continue to play an important role in demanding justice and environmental redress.

The fight for justice has continued for decades as women have been at the forefront of activism for remedies, to end this situation. For example, Rachna Dhingra, Kavita Naik, Imtiaz Begum, Rashida Banu, etc. are the personalities whose names are specially mentioned. A part of the women's society of Bhopal is challenging the difficult physical conditions and challenging the economic plight of the family and dreaming of spending the coming days well, on the other hand, some noble women wishing for the well-being of poor Bhopal residents have embarked on a struggle to get all kinds of facilities from the government. This struggle is only for the women's society Not for welfare but for the well-being of the people of Bhopal and future

generations. If we put aside the narrow view glasses and analyse them from moral and human perspectives, it is understood that this struggle of women of Bhopal continues to flow in the bosom of this society as one of the subtle currents of post-independence women's movements.

References:

1. Eckerman Ingrid: The Bhopal saga, causes and consequences of the world's largest industrial disaster, universities press, 2005
2. D'silva, Themistocles: The black box of Bhopal, A Closer Look At The World's Deadliest Industrial Disaster, Trafford Publishing, 2006
3. H.L. Prajapati: Gas Tragedy: An Eye Witness, Mittal Publication, Delhi, 2003, Page 48
4. Ibid, Page-48
5. Ibid, Page-52
6. Dr N.R. Bhandari: 25 years of Bhopal Gas Tragedy, The Inside Story Untold Truths, Lalwani Publications, Bhopal, 2010, Page-35 Other Reference

1. Chouhan, T.R and others: Bhopal: The Inside Story, The Apex Press, New York, 1994
2. Bogard, William (1989). The Bhopal Tragedy: Language, logic, and the poli- tics of a hazard, Westview Press
3. Cassells, J. (1993). The Uncertain Promise of Law: Lessons from Bhopal, Uni- versity of Toronto Press.
4. Cherniak, Martin. (1986). The Hawk's Nest Incident: American's worst in- dustrial disaster, Yale University Press
5. Lapierre, D. and Javier Moro (2002). Five Past Midnight in Bhopal. New York, Warner Books
6. Larabee, A. (2000). The Bhopal Effect. Decade of Disaster. Chicago, University of Illinois Press.
7. Mooney, B. J. (2002). The Bhopal Di- saster: Discourse and narrative in the ethnography of an event. Anthropol. ogy. Ann Arbor: 292. http: / / www.il.proquest.com
8. Morehouse, Ward and Arun Subramaniam (1986). The Bhopal Tragedy: What really happened, and what it means for American workers and communities at risk. New York, Alfred A. Knopf. http: / / www.cipa apex.org
9. Morehouse, Ward and Chandana Mathur, (2005) People Against Power: Essays provoked by Bhopal's twentieth anniversary, Great Barrington, North River Press.

** The above article has recorded eyewitness accounts in addition to bibliographic support.

7

Unveiling Possibilities: Exploring the Various Aspects of Women's Empowerment in India

Buddhadeb Laha

Abstract

For ages, women have been deprived in social, political, and economic sectors. This deprivation has been enhanced by a harmful system widely known as patriarchy. This phenomenon is universal in nature and India is no exception. Despite some progress post-independence, women in India still face major challenges to empowerment, such as gender-based violence, wage disparities, limited political representation, and social prejudices. Conservative mindsets and inadequate infrastructure further amplify these barriers, in rural areas. Women's empowerment in India is an ongoing process is an ongoing process that is necessary for breaking harmful norms and creating an inclusive environment.

After years of waiting, the Women's Reservation Bill was transformed into law in 2023. It has been marking a milestone in Indian's journey towards women's empowerment. The Women's Reservation Bill holds immense significance as it aims to empower women by providing them with adequate representation in Parliament and state legislatures. By reserving one-third of seats for women, the Bill seeks to promote gender equality, challenge patriarchal norms, and bring about a cultural shift in societal attitudes. This increased representation can lead to more inclusive policymaking, improved policies, and potentially even economic growth. Ultimately, the Bill can inspire future generations of women to participate in politics and public service, strengthening Indian democracy and promoting a more diverse and representative government. This study analyzes the complex and interconnect issues related to women's empowerment, which play a major role in achieving gender equality and sustainable development. The research places emphasis on the review and analysis

of various books, articles, and publications. It attempts to uncover the interrelations between women's empowerment and various factors such as education, economic independence, healthcare, political participation and socio-cultural aspects.

Keywords: *Women's empowerment, gender equality, sustainable development, education, economic autonomy, healthcare, political participation.*

Introduction:

Women's empowerment is one of the major issues of world politics and domestic politics. In India, this process of empowerment faces various and multifaceted challenges. Women empowerment in India signifies enabling women to get equal rights and participation of all aspects of life such as education, employment, politics. Inclusion of decision making process is also important in order attain empowerment. Before the Independence, Indian women faced various challenges such as gender discrimination, exclusion from education sector, economic dependence etc. Women were alienated from every aspect of social, political and cultural life. At that time, it was commonly believed that women lacked the ability to take decisions. Following Independence, the situation underwent a slight transformation with the incorporation liberty and equality principles in the Indian Constitution on one hand, and the other hand, many laws had been enacted for the emancipation of women, such as The Hindu Marriage Act (1955), The Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), The Protection of Women Against Domestic Violence (2005), The Sexual Harassment of women (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act (2013) etc. Besides the enactment of laws, many social schemes also provided for women like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, Stand-Up India Scheme, Mohila E-Haat etc.

Just before the independence, women also had little presence in the education sector. At that time women were not encouraged to go to school and avail quality education. But after the independence, several educational and social schemes launched to tackle this challenge like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Saksham, National Schemes of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education etc. The concerned efforts and initiatives launched since India's independence have yielded remarkable results, with women's literacy rates soaring from 6% in 1947 to 70.3% today. But despite these improvements, there are several challenges in front of women's empowerment. In this essay,

we will discuss the various dimensions of women empowerment in India, its challenges, and future prospects.

Definition of Women Empowerment:

Women empowerment is defined as the ability to empower woman in a social, economic, political, and educational sense, so that she can make her own choices and take charge of her life. But this definition seems too restricted. In its widest sense, Women empowerment focuses on the possibility of women making independent choices. Women are expected to be free, with the opportunity not just to choose within set limits or boundaries, but to choose whatever they want when they want to choose it. This is very necessary for meeting the aspirations of women life. It has been duly noted that Amartya sen's capability approach is very relevant in women empowerment. It has been elaborated more by Martha Nussbaum. To them, women's capabilities are the kinds of actions or opportunities that allow women to have the capacity to decide for themselves. And when women are capable of making independent choices and get the capacity to decide for themselves, then they will be capable enough to participate in decision making process in many ways personal, social, economic and political.

Context: In the 1990s, feminist thought gained prominence on both international politics and national politics. Prior to this decade, women's position in the socio-economic and political spheres of most countries was largely marginal. However, during 1990s, this concept achieved a new dimension. This period witnessed efforts to integrate women into the processes of development, reflecting a conscious attempt to address their role and, inclusion in broader societal progress. These efforts can also be observed in India.

Current situation of women empowerment in India: India has made progress in women's empowerment, particularly in the areas of education, political participation and financial independence. While there is still much work to be done, notable progress has been made in certain areas towards promoting women empowerment in India, such as:

1) Education and Literacy: Education is a crucial factor in empowering women, and without it, the overall development of a nation cannot be achieved. Before independence the educational rights of women were largely neglected. Many social reformers fought for women to ensure these rights. These social initiatives led women to

make their presence in the education sectors. But at that time, women's inclusion in the education sector was very low and it was limited to the elite class. After independence, the constitution of India incorporated the right to equality and aimed to establish social justice through various measures. Article 14 of the constitution guarantees equal rights to all citizen while article 15 prohibits discrimination on the ground of religion, caste, gender, or place of birth. However, despite of these provisions, the rate of women's participation in education was very low.

As per the publications of the Ministry of Statistics Program Implementation either in 1951, The literacy for girls and women in India stood at 8.9 percent as compared to the male literacy rate of 27.16 percent. In 1990 it has increased to 39.2 percent higher than that of 1951. In the implementation of the Right to Education Act of 2009, there were significant achievements with respect to literacy of women. As of 2021, the percentage of literate women stands at 75.8 percent. This statistical data shows that women literacy rate has been improving since independence. Alongside this, there is also an improvement in gross enrollment ratio of women. According to 2017 UNESCO Institute of Statistical Report, the enrollment rate of women in upper primary education was 10.9% in 1950-51, which increased to approximately 48.2 % by 2021.

2) Economic Empowerment: President Droupadi Murmu on September 4, 2024 said "economic empowerment of women will lead to the country's progress and development, and asked men to help women achieve their dreams by identifying their capabilities" (the Hindu). It highlights the importance of women's economic empowerment for the overall development of the country. It is expected to create more job opportunities for women, which will help alleviate poverty and fulfill their aspirations. Besides this, women should also be encouraged to start businesses so that they can become self- reliant. Initiatives such as "Self Help Groups" and "Women Specific Loans" instituted by the Government of India have created avenues for the womenfolk to start small scale enterprises and occupations. But the gulf between earnings of men and women, in both rural and urban areas persists as a major concern. It must be understood that the Equal Remuneration Act that was enacted in the year 1976, was meant to rectify wage based discrimination against women. Pursuant to this legislation, women who experience discrimination in the work place have the statutory right to seek legal recourse and sue their employer for redress.

3) Political empowerment: Women were alienated from political sphere from very old times. They were not regarded as capable of making decisions for the society. During colonial India a small number of women were able to become leaders. At that time women voting rights were also neglected. However, in 1921, women were granted right to vote and allowed to participate in local election, but in a limited manner. Soon after the independence, Indian women gained the constitutional safeguards regarding Political Participation. This provision is incorporated in article 325 of Indian Constitution. Women also gained the voting rights through universal suffrage. Article 326 of Indian Constitution ensured universal suffrage to all adult citizens, regardless of gender.

In the first general election, the voter turnout for women was 46.6%, whereas for men, it was 63.3%. by the 16th Lok Sabha election, the voter turnout for women had increased to 65.6%, while for men, it stood at 67.1%. This data indicates significant progress in terms of voter turnout among women over the years. However, a complete different trend is observed when it comes to women being elected as members of legislature. In the first general election only 23 women elected out of 466 seats. By the 17th Lok Sabha election it stood at 73 out of 543 of total seats. No viable progress has been marked in this regard. The inclusion of women in the decision-making process has been notably low in India since independence. Despite progress in voter turnout and awareness, their representation in legislative bodies and other key decision- making roles remains small since the independence.

In this situation, the policy makers of India feel that it is essential to implement a reservation system. In the case of local self-government, such initiatives were undertaken through the 73 and 74th constitutional amendments in 1993 and 1994, respectively, for the first time. These two amendments introduced provisions for women's reservation in local self-government to promote and gender equality and empower women in decision making process. 73rd amendment refers to the reservation of one third of total seats in panchayat for women. Whereas 74th amendment refers one third reservation of seats for women in municipalities. Karnataka was the first state who implemented these acts. In many cases, it is found that women are not capable enough to participate effectively in the decision making processes of local bodies, and their responsibilities are often carried out by their male counterparts. However, it marked a

significant step forward in achieving the empowerment of women. Alongside this, a reservation policy was enacted in 2023 as part of the National Policy on Women Empowerment (2001) for both union and state legislatures. Under this reservation act, 30 percent of seats in both the central and state legislatures have been reserved for women. This act will be implemented after the next census.

Obstacles in the way of Empowerment of Women: There are various obstacles to women empowerment in India, such as:

1) Patriarchy: "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman"- this statement made by Simon De Beauvoir highlights the socially constructed nature of gender roles, in her book *The Second Sex (1949).* According to De Beauvoir the concept of women is constituted by the patriarchal social structure. Women have been subjugated by the ideology of patriarchy across the globe as well as in India. Patriarchy is deeply rooted in Indian society and every aspect of women life are controlled by this. It perpetuates the outdated belief that women are inherently unsuited for participation in the public sphere. In this context, all the values and policies for society were constructed to prevent women's entry into this area. It also considers women to be unworthy for decision-making, in this respect, women have kept far from the political arena for many ages. In case of economic empowerment, because of the concept of equality in the constitution, women have obtained opportunities for entry into the economic sector. However, it is still yet to be fully experienced. Women are still relegated behind in terms of employment and in many cases they are also halted back from entering jobs by their families. The Private / Public dichotomy is relevant in order to understand the phenomena. "Within the western liberal tradition, men have been associated with public sphere, in the character of government, and civil society, while women have been indelibly associated with the private sphere, in the character of family" (Thornton, winter 1991). In this connection women were bound to their traditional role, which hinders the empowerment of them.

2) Violence against women: This is one of the major obstacles against women empowerment. Stereotypical thinking in India has led to an alarming number of incidents of violence against women, such as rapes, sexual harassments, and domestic violence. Thousands of women suffer abuse in India every year, as revealed by the figures of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). As per the report, 51 women become victims of violence every hour in this country according to 2022 data (TOI). This includes rape, sexual harassment, domestic

violence, female foeticide, etc. Government of India has enacted many laws to deal with these crimes, such as: The Hindu Marriage Act (1955), The Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), The Protection of Women Against Domestic Violence (2005), The Sexual Harassment of women (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act (2013). But despite these laws, incidents of violence against women are increasing.

3) Child Marriage and Poverty: Child marriage is still prevalent in rural India, which hinders girls' education and career opportunities. According to a report of UNICEF, 30% of girls in India are married before the age of 18.

Future Prospective and concluding remarks: The scope for women's empowerment in India can expend further if government and society work together in an integrated manner. Some possible measures include:

Firstly, we need to build a gender sensitive atmosphere. Incorporating gender sensitivity into school curricula and socialization processes can foster a culture of empathy, respect, and inclusivity among children, promoting healthy relationships between genders from an early age. This way, they will grow up to understand and respect the opposite gender.

Secondly, government should provide more grants and loans to empower women as entrepreneurs, especially by increasing support for small and medium enterprises, so that they can emancipate their problems.

Lastly, to empower women and eliminate violence against them, strict laws must be enacted. However, it should be noted that merely enacting laws will not suffice; efforts must also be made to enhance women's capabilities. This is because, without empowerment, women may not be able to fully utilize the benefits of these laws. For instance, the Domestic Violence Act, passed in 2005, can be cited as an example. Despite its enactment, women continue to fall victim to domestic violence even today.

In India, empowering women is a complex and ongoing journey. While there has been notable progress over the last few decades, numerous challenges still lie ahead. It is essential for both the government and society to collaborate in educating women, ensuring their financial independence, and enhancing their social and political standing. By focusing on women's empowerment, India can not only advance its development but also foster a fair and equitable society.

Each of us has a part to play in supporting this vital journey toward women's empowerment.

References:

1. BAHLIEDA, R. (2015). Chapter 1: THE LEGACY OF PATRIARCHY. *Counterpoints*, *488*, 15–67. http: / / www.jstor.org / stable / 45136330
2. Bannerji, H. (2016). Patriarchy in the Era of Neoliberalism: The Case of India. *Social Scientist*, *44*(3 / 4), 3–27. http: / / www.jstor.org / stable / 24890241
3. Beechey, V. (1979). On Patriarchy. *Feminist Review*, *3*, 66–82. https: / / doi.org / 10.2307 / 1394710
4. CHAKRABORTY, BISWANATH. NANDY DEBASISH. "Tatta Dharana O Bisaya – Bitarke ANTARJATIK SAMPARKA". 2014, Progressive Publisher.
5. Datta, P. (1995). WOMEN AND PANCHAYAT BODIES IN INDIA. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, *56*(1 / 4), 66–77. http: / / www.jstor.org / stable / 41855726
6. Devi, D. S., & Lakshmi, G. (2005). POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIAN LEGISLATURE / : A STUDY. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, *66*(1), 75–92. http: / / www.jstor.org / stable / 41856113
7. Duflo, E. (2012). Women Empowerment and Economic Development. *Journal of Economic Literature*, *50*(4), 1051–1079. http: / / www.jstor.org / stable / 23644911
8. https: / / mospi.gov.in / sites / default / files / reports_and_publication / statistical_publication / social_statistics / WM16Chapter3.pdf
9. Mehra, R. (1997). Women, Empowerment, and Economic Development. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *554*, 136–149. http: / / www.jstor.org / stable / 1049571
10. Parida, S. C., Nayak, S. (2009). Empowerment of Women in India. India: Northern Book Centre.
11. Rai, Praveen. (2017). Women's Participation in Electoral Politics in India: Silent Feminisation. South Asia Research. Volume 37. 58-77. 10.1177 / 0262728016675529.
12. Thornton, M. (1991). The Public / Private Dichotomy: Gendered and Discriminatory. *Journal of Law and Society*, *18*(4), 448–463. https: / / doi.org / 10.2307 / 1410319
13) Vasbist, L. (2010). MARTHA NUSSBAUM'S CAPABILITIES APPROACH: PERILS AND PROMISES. *Journal of the Indian Law Institute*, *52*(2), 230–266. http: / / www.jstor.org / stable / 43953495

8

Women: The Half Sky, Female Foeticide and it's Experiential Derivatives

Chandrima Basu

Abstract

Gender shapes our political and social landscape and our personal interactions. Gender is embedded so thoroughly in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs, and our desires, that it appears to us to be completely natural. Amniocentesis or the process by which the amniotic fluid is extracted from a pregnant woman to determine the health of the fetus or unborn child. Such birth-related defects are more common in girls and others in boys. Thus the process of the test involves determining the sex of the child so as to establish the presence of defects The aim of the test isn't to ascertain the sex of the child , though it is now being used in a negative direction for pre-birth sex determination. It isn't a current issue but it has been a genetic problem like in biology itself in the generation to blame women of carrying a girl child in its womb, that is being answerable to patriarchal society is been, casted in the film Lajja. Patriarchal thoughts don't pollute the generations; rather it is a poison to the society that can only be uprooted with the hands of education. Haryana is the typical hotspot to address the idea through the abstract. India is a developing country, but to make it a developed country there are some issues that must be resolved to make women accustomed to their place that isn't they deserve but they themselves own. Women is a face of a mother that must be worshiped in the bodies of men and women both to eradicate the problem of patriarchy. The Government of India has taken several steps to uplift the position of a women through its schemes that can be magical if the initiatives can be taken from a family itself as family is the core factor to reach but the solution regarding the problem "Patriarchy".

Keywords: *Amniocentesis, fetus, birth-related defects, sex, determination of sex*

Contemporary Indian society has been exposed to the broad processes of social transformation, agricultural modernisation and economic development, urbanization and rapid industrialization and globalization, where women plays a very important role in every spheres but it seems paradoxical for the position of women as the consecutive outcomes has been gender disparities. So what could be the answer to it, let us have a look. Internalisation of women's role in every men and women's mind and body and ultimately to the society, so as to trigger the sensitivities that has been long suppressed by patrilineal factors.

A draft can be taken from the situation,in a household family a pregnant woman has been taken to the hospital for internal (foetus) check up and for amniocentesis where there are some scenes that are captured such as, the man is forcing the woman to deliberately abort the child as it is a girl. Another such exam ,if not a women conceiving a baby child having birth-related defects is blamed but logically and scientifically the complete blame goes over the men as sex hormones deliberates. The situation is grim, it is the utmost time for the government stay a witness to these situation and come with a solution. lets keep in mind determination of sex before the child takes birth predominantly is a crime nowadays. The poverty has a direct link with the gender inequality and inequity. people do not have the urgency to eat meals a day are out of poverty but itself are dealing with if faced gender inequality then it becomes a very tiresome job for them to have. Income inequality if mentioned it do have a pyramidal structure in the framework of Marxism. The last decade scenario shows the structure that social problems are increasing day by day. The theoretical upbringing of study from higher education to secondary higher education has a lot of information regarding the problems we are facing nowadays. The most important sources of this newfound concern with poverty and inequality are the spectacular increase in economic inequality and other forms of disadvantage in many late-industrial countries, the striking persistance of other forms of inequality despite decades of quite aggressive egalitarian reform, an emerging concern that poverty and inequality may have negative macro-level effects on terrorism, total economic production, and ethnic unrest, a growing awareness of the negative individual level effects of poverty on health, political participation, and a host of other life conditions. The rise of a "global village" in which spatial differences in the standard of living have become more widely visible and hence

increasingly difficult to ignore, the ongoing tendency to expose and deligitimate new types of inequalities that,not so long ago,were taken for growing commitment to a broader conception of human encompasses rights to basic social amenities well as rights to basic forms of social participation such as employment. The most important thing is that the theory let us to demarcate in remarkably in two ways,first only two of the seven reasons for our newfound interest in poverty and inequality are about brute empirics ,while all others are about changes in how we have come to view,study and evaluate this empirics.Rather,we are to understand this inequality was always rife with externalities ,however inadequately we may have appreciated them in the past.Now, contemporary social system should guarantee on opportunity to all citizens to participate in economic life and hence avoid the most extreme forms of social and economic exclusion. Women constitutes half a human population which has been discriminated irrespective of the country to which they belong.Indeed,far from treating inequality as exclusively a moral problem,there is a growing tendency to emphasize its profound consequences and threats for the world. Female foeticide is one of the worst forms of violence against women where a women is denied her most basic and fundamental right i.e, "right to life". The case set up on behalf of the petitioner;Society is that the act were enacted with the objective to prohibit prenatal diagnostic techniques for determination of sex of the foetus leading to female foeticide. But unfortunately,it's implementation is more in letter and less in spirit. The problem of sex determination and gender selection is a serious issue and is one of the biggest social problems faced by our society. Despite enactment of the act and subsequent amendments,the child sex ratio has not shown significant improvement, hence ,putting sufficient concern and questions on the proper implementation of the act. It is contended that equating clerical errors on the same footing with the actual offence of sex determination shows the inherent weakness in the language of the act. It is proposed that to prohibit prenatal diagnostic techniques for determination of sex of the foetus leading to female foeticide. Such abuse of techniques in discriminateluaginst the female sex and affects the dignity and status of women. A legislation is required to regulate the use of such techniques and to provide deterrent punishment to stop such inhuman act. The key components of the stratification system that do bring out such cases are the institutional processes that define certain types of goods across various jobs or occupations in the division of labor. With

the advent of privatization commercialisation,the use of pre-natal diagnostic technologies is growing into a thriving business in india. The rigidity of a stratification system is indexed by the continuity (over time)in the social standing of its members. This rigidity acts two ways:one is positive another is negative so the consequence rigidity may be severe. The reason the system of stratification shall not bring change in the society rather it destroys. The stratification system rests on ascriptive processes to the extent that conditions present at birth influence the subsequent social standing of individuals. In contemporary societies,ascription of all kinds is usually seen as undesirable or discriminatory and government policy(e.g,anti discrimination legislation) is therefore directed towards fashioning a stratification system in which individuals acquire resources solely by virtue of their achievements. The degree of crystallization is one of the consequences of rigidity in social stratification system is indexed by the correlations among the various resources that are socially valued . If there correlations are strong,then the same individuals will consistently appear at the top of all hierarchies,while other individuals will consistently appear at the bottom of the stratification system. By contrast various types of status inconsistencies will emerge in stratification systems with weekly correlated hierarchies,and it is correspondingly difficult in such systems to define a unitary set of classes that have predictive power with respect to all resources. So it will not work in an orderly ordered plan;for the society to remove such inadequacies from the society. Given the complexity of contemporary inequality one might expect most scholars to adopt a multidimensional approach to characterizing it for approach that might begin by specifying the multivariate inequality space valued goods. In the most extreme versions of this approach,the resulting classes are assumed to be real entities that preexist the distribution of assets and many scholars therefore refer to the “effects” of class location on the assets that their incumbents control. The foregoing account, which is a largely consensual rendition of the rationale for social class measurements, nonetheless conceals much internal debate within the field on how best to identify and characterize the boundaries dividing the population into classes. The postwar period,also was notable for a flourishing of gradational measurement approaches that again treated occupations as the fundamental units of analysis but assumed that such occupations may be ordered into a unidimensional socioeconomic or prestige scale.Deep rooted patriarchy: patriarchal mindset is deep

rooted in india. Most of India, with some exceptions,has strong patriarchal and patrilineal customs,traditions. The United Nations General Assembly had adopted Resolution expressing concern about prenatal sex selection,female infanticide and female genital mutilation. The said resolution also urged all states to enact and enforce legislation protecting girls from all forms of violence including female infanticide and personal sex selections. The United Nations Fourth Conference on women in 1995 adopted the Beijing declaration and platform for action. Me, as a student encompasse. with many situations that forced me to have a presentation regarding female foeticide and it's experiential derivatives. In 2024, the ongoing female foeticide cases makes our country more underdeveloped and outdated as the world have much expectation from the country India where this kinds of features may take India to one corner that will call a share for the country,the reason I choose this relevant topic in the picturesque of India . Such context related topics may historically be a stain removal changer in the country,so carrying such legacy shall make our country more brighter and enlighten day by day.A new spirit has to be imbibed propagating that a female child is not a curse. It is not a liability. It is not a drain on the economy. It is not an instrument through which dowry has to be given. A feeling has to be nurtured that she is the daughter, she is the mother and she is the life partner.31 Foeticide can not be controlled unless the equation changes and families begin to value their daughters more than they do at present. It doesn't take much to kill an infant daughter even without the aid of technology, if she is unwanted.Among all the factors, which need attention,education is the most important. In parts of SouthAsia where education and employment opportunities for women are relatively high, the female to male ratio is comparable to that the developed countries. For Instance in Sri Lanka The sex ratio is 102 women per 100 men and inIndian state of Kerala 104 women per 100 men.This reflects towards the deep rooted manifold,short and long-term effects of education on the psyche and life pattern of people.If we want to stop the female foeticide or neglect of women, we have to stop looking for quick fixes and instead face the problem squarely.There is no way to ensure the healthy survival baby girls unless families find them worth nurturing. That is indeed a complex task, which allows for no easy short-term solutions. Activistsintervention has not led to curbing eThereal challenge before to figure out ways in which a realization of the value of daughters can be enhanced in the eyes of their own

families. All those who have a stake in it apart from the government authorities, likewomen's group, health groups, non-governmental organizations, the academia, the media and most importantly the medical professionals have to play their part to see that the provisions are implemented and the provisions are strengthened by amendments of the act.32 Unless social action is supplemented with prompt implementation of regulations under the law meant to stop female foeticide, such practices will continue to flourish.To ensure smiles on the faces of our youth, both boys and girls, let us intensify joint efforts to rootout unhealthy social elements, 'Now' since future depends upon what we do in the presentFemale foeticide is the killing of a female fetus through illegal methods. The frequency female foeticide in India is increasing day by day. Despite enactment of various policies and schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Sukanya Samriddhi yojana, female foeticide continues to increase at an alarming rate. The Indian government enacted Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PCPNDT) in 1994 to ban and punish prenatal sex screening and female foeticide. But the PCPNDT Act has been poorly enforced by authorities leading to female fortified culture in the nation.

Poor state of woman in India:

As per the Sample Registration System (SRS) for the period 2015-2017, the sex ratio at birth (SRB) is dropping continuously since Census 2011, coming down from 909 girls per thousand boys in 2011-2013 to 896 girls in 2015-2017.An analysis of the NFHS-4 data revealed a bias toward male as the first-born child. The SRB among first-born children was 927, meaning that 2.5% of first-born girls are eliminated before birth. Reasons for female foeticide: Cultural preference: There is a strong son preference in India and this leads to a skewed sex ratio towards male over females. Most families prefer son for a variety of social and economic reasons. A son is often seen as an asset and a daughter as a liability. The prospect of parents losing daughters to the husband's family and expensive dowry of daughters further discourages parents from having daughters. Bane of cheap technology: Female foeticide has been linked to the cheap ultrasound technology and its widespread adoption in India. Ultrasound has helped in saving many lives but it's illegal use led to killing of girl child in foetus. Poverty: Due to lack of development there are gross inequalities in the country that restrict access to resources. Poverty prevent education, and often poor people view girls as liability due to dowry system and perceived notion of girls as burden. This has led to increase in

female foeticide. Poor enforcement of the laws: Although laws are their to prevent female foeticide, their poor implementation has led to less impact on curbing female foeticide crime. Often agencies are unable to nab the criminal. Deep rooted patriarchy: Patriarchal mindset is deep rooted in India.Most of India, with some exceptions, has strong patriarchal and patrilineal customs, traditions

End note:

Bardach, Eugene and Eric M. Patashnik. 2020. A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.

Goodnough, Abby. 2019. "Obamacare Premiums to Fall and Number of Insurers to Rise Next Year." New York Times, October 22, 2019. https: / / www.nytimes.com / 2019 / 10 / 22 / us / politics / obamacare-trump.html

Gupta, Dipak K. 2011. Analyzing Public Policy: Concepts, Tools, and Techniques. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Healthcare.gov. n.d. "Affordable Care Act." https: / / www.healthcare.gov / glossary / affordable-care-act /

9

Women and Economy: A Critical Analysis

Dr. Deepanjana Halder Majumder

Abstract

Women and girls are directly responsible for gender inequality. The pattern of this inequality is similar in almost all societies, but ultimately it harms everyone in society. Therefore, women are not able to benefit from the broader development process. This deficit is reflected in the lower average wages of women on the one hand and the lower labor force participation rate on the other. While the direct contribution of women to the production system is acknowledged, the indirect contribution of women, including their role in biological and social spheres, is ignored in the mainstream discussion of economic development. The discussion on the role of women in the economy is discussed in three sections - the first section takes up the role of women in economic development, an attempt is made to assess this role from both numerical and theoretical perspectives, and the second section sheds light on the role of women in economic development around the world, and the last section discusses the role of women in the Indian economic landscape. An attempt is made to portray the position of women in the economic sphere in India in the 21st century.

Keywords: *Women, Iobor, Economy*

INTRODUCTION

As the dependence of women on men has been recognized since the past, it is also true that this dependence has fixed women in a low-value position in society. As a result of this, women could not match themselves in the larger scope of the society beyond the boundaries of the individual. Therefore, women are not able to enjoy the benefits of the larger development process. The issue of women's role in the economy has been discussed in the discussion article under

three sections - the first section has placed the role of women in economic development, an attempt has been made to evaluate this role from both numerical and theoretical aspects and the second section has shed light on the role of women in economic development throughout the world. The last section deals with the role of women in the Indian economic landscape.

The way, in which responsibilities are assigned in the personal and domestic spheres, the picture of the role of women and the status of women in terms of development and development is quite depressing. Nowhere in developing countries are women equal to men in terms of legal, social and economic rights. As a result, on the one hand, as the disparity between men and women in terms of economic opportunities, wealth rights and control is increasing, on the other hand, the space of women is shrinking in terms of political power. Women and girls bear the direct responsibility for gender discrimination. The picture of this discrimination is similar in almost all societies, but it ultimately harms everyone in the society.

women in economic development: theoretical and quantitative aspects

It is well known that mainstream economics is based on utilitarianism, whose principle is the equitable distribution of resources based on the market. That is, as the individual will contribute in building the overall domestic production (GDP/Gross Domestic Product) in the economy, every person in the society should be able to get their own share from the overall domestic production. If we understand the meaning of this concept, we will understand that the basis of utilitarianism is the balance between the individual's contributions and his/her receipts in return. But this principle is opposed by those who, according to them, the utilitarian conception of justice violate the notion of impartiality of justice. The principle of impartiality of justice is quite different from the utilitarian principle, because whereas the principle of justice as fairness advocates the allocation of inputs necessary for production and the equitable distribution of income to the less privileged people at the bottom of the society, there, the principle of utilitarianism relies on market-based allocation of resources. As a more holistic critique of the principle of proportional equity, John Rawls' theory can be mentioned. The famous philosopher John Rawls wants to connect the principle of equality with compensatory justice through his concept of "Justice through Fairness".

Now the ethical basis of distribution can be highlighted in terms of the concept of compensatory justice. This moral foundation is to free people from injustice and exploitation. The principle of justice has a profound significance in analyzing the role of women in the economy. If we look at the real field of economics, we will see that there is a kind of gender disparity in terms of wages and scholarships, data-wise called 'Gender Gaps'. This deficit picture is reflected in lower average wages for women on the one hand and lower labor force participation ratios on the other. While the direct contribution of women to the production system is acknowledged, the indirect contribution, including the role of women in the biological and social spheres, is ignored in mainstream discussions of economic development.

Important decisions about the allocation of work and consumption opportunities within the family are the result of a complex sociological process. Many economists and sociologists hold similar views. In fact, behaviors within the family have evolved under patriarchy.

WOMEN IN ECONOMICS: APPLIED PERSPECTIVES

According to feminist theorist Simone de Beauvais, economic control or pressure is one of the most effective controls on women in society. As a result of this, women's place in the society and the state continues to shrink, women cannot participate in larger development processes or decision-making processes. This point has been supported by many traditional economists, sociologists and feminists.

According to Amartya Sen (1993), the role of the family has been neglected in traditional economic theory. Mr. Sen has given special importance to the gap that remains in the status of men and women in poor countries. However, according to him, compared to the gap between men and women in developed countries, the picture of positional differences in poor countries is qualitatively different.

Using the North American paradigm, theorist Marilyn Power analyzed the position of women in capitalist society within a Marxist theoretical framework. Pawar discusses how women in capitalist society are transformed from the domestic production system into day laborers and finally into a perpetual marginal labor force or reserved working class. Gender inequality is viewed in terms of class problems in Marxist thought. Therefore, according to Marxist theorists, the establishment of communism will end the gender-problem. But according to feminist theorists, the root cause of women's problems

lies in patriarchy. According to some feminist theorists, the context of both feminism and Marxism needs to be unified, and then a proper theoretical framework can be developed by giving importance to both the consequences of capitalism and patriarchy. However, China's experience paints a different picture of our women's problem. The collective system of production in this country has not been able to solve the women's problem, because as long as consumption is managed within the family, the issue of women's freedom will remain weak.

Feminists believe that a particular feature of domestic work is the gendered division of labour. When women move beyond their mere 'housewife' identity to work for the purpose of earning, three things happen: First, there is a disparity in earnings between men and women for the same work. Secondly, the employment of a large number of women in some occupations is observed. Every employer has different characteristics. As is the case in advanced capitalist countries, where girls are not independent earners, they try to raise their social status through marriage. But in post-marriage life, within the boundaries of the family, women are greatly affected to do within the family, however, the status of women is much lower than that of men and women are subordinate to men in the family and society.

WOMEN IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE GLOBAL PICTURE

Social and economic development affects men and women differently. Women are mostly used in agriculture and women face various problems in this sector. Most rural women in third world countries are engaged in agriculture. Agricultural women in sub-Saharan Africa spend two-thirds of their total time working. Women are responsible for food production, food processing and often selling the produce in the market. However, in this case, a complex system has been created in the Asian continent. In India, the labor force participation rate of women is declining due to surplus labor. As a result, more women have to work as day laborers in the land.

Due to poverty in Bangladesh, women are engaged in various types of hard work as laborers; For example, women are also employed in work such as road-building. If we look at China, we can see that in the last twenty-five years, the employment of women in the rural sector has increased. China's Gender Development Index Rank is eighty-first, with a female labor force participation rate of 84 percent

(Human Development Report, 2006). China's Gender Development Index (GDI) value was 0.957 in 2020, indicating that the gaps between men and women in education, health, and economic resources are narrowing. However, there is still work to be done to achieve gender equality in China.

In South Asian countries, such as Indonesia, women workers take an active role in agriculture, especially in harvesting. In North African and Middle Eastern countries, where male workers are employed in the oil-producing sector, female workers are entirely employed in agriculture. In Sri Lanka, Malaysia, women labor force is engaged in picking tea leaves and collecting rubber or as irregular workers in coconut plantations.

The Human Development Report, 2004 informs us that in developing countries the economic employment rate of women is 52.4% while the economic employment rate of men is 64%. In less developed countries the rate is 61.8 for women and 72 for men. If we look at the Arab world, we see that the picture is different. In 2004, the economic employment rate for women was 26 percent and for men 34 percent. In East-Asia and Pacific countries, the female employment rate is 65.4 percent and the male employment rate is 79 percent. On the other hand, women contribute 51.4 percent and men 64 percent of total economic work in Latin American and Caribbean countries. In South America, 36 percent of women work and 44 percent of men at home. Economic rates in sub-Saharan countries show a clear picture of women working at 63 percent and men at 73 percent.

POSITION OF WOMEN: IN THE PATTERN OF INDIAN ECONOMY

It is widely recognized that the main aspect of women's status is her economic status. Whether we look at ownership of property, control over resources, wages earned, amount of food consumed, access to medical services or sex ratio to measure women's position, we find that Indian women are never equal to Indian men.

The Constitution of independent India came into force in 1950. The approach of the framers of this constitution was undoubtedly progressive, as certain clauses in the constitution guaranteed equality to women, as well as empowering the state to take appropriate measures to reduce gender inequality. But much earlier, in October 1938, the National Planning Committee was constituted to outline the future of the planned economy of independent India. One of the thirty-

nine committees published a report in 1947 titled "The Role of Women in a Planned Economy".

After the independence of India in 1947, there were some changes in the Indian economy. A look at the economic context shows that from today's girls are seeing an abundance of modern industry and ever-evolving workplaces. Nevertheless, agriculture continues to have a major impact on employment, with the share of agricultural workers accounting for two-thirds of the total workforce; A look at the statistics shows that the demographic position of women workers is almost negligible. Even in this "invisible" (invisible) position of women, some interesting features draw attention. Although the employment rate of rural women is much higher than that of urban workplaces, economic statistics in India show that the growth rate of rural women workers is about three percent. National Sample Survey Organization According to Labor Surveys conducted by NSSO, the percentage of women workers increased from 29.9 percent in 1999-2000 to 32.7 percent in 2004-2005. It increased from 9 percent to 16.6 percent in 2004-2005.

Data from India's Census News shows that the overall increase in the female labor force participation rate is nothing to cheer about. Problems with women's rapid 'employment' in urban labor markets include gender pay disparity, part-time work and home-based production work - where conventional labor laws do not apply or there is no opportunity to form trade unions. However, despite various problems, exploitation, women engage themselves in small-scale industrial work, because of this, women can help their families economically. As women's problems are complex and multi-faceted, the real picture cannot be captured by a single piece of data or statistics. Another characteristic of women workers in India is that they are largely employed in the unorganized sector of industry. According to the statistics of 1991, the number of women workers is 4.2 percent in the organized sector and 95.8 percent in the unorganized sector. But in the unorganized sector, despite the large employment of women, their wages are very low. Besides, due to scarcity, women workers also engage themselves in part-time work. Women workers in the unorganized sector do not get any benefits in terms of wages, job security, future security, security - why large numbers of women flock to the unorganized sector - this poison makes it clear. The fact that the workers have been pushed to the margins in large numbers also becomes visible.

GENDER-PERCEPTIONS AND ECONOMICS: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

In June 1991, India adopted the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPS) as part of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and takes globalization [Privatization, Liberalization and Globalization]. It is pertinent to mention here that this reform program was implemented at a time of severe economic crisis in India, which was caused by external borrowing. Loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) pushed India towards accepting the terms of these structural reforms. As a result, India accepted the structural reform program under these conditions. The impact of this program is reflected in various areas of economy and society. Marginalization of women workers, which has increased since the introduction of these programs in the last decade of the last century, is responsible for the deterioration of the economic status of women in rural and urban areas. The program ignored the growing division of labor between men and women. As a result, the program did not succeed in closing the gender gap in improvement indicators.

Finally, structural reform programs have not had any positive impact on changing the status of women workers in India. Therefore, women workers are still marginalized mired in poverty, uncertainty and problems. A large number of women workers are flocking to the unorganized sector of industry. However, despite earning money and extending financial support to the family, women workers could not participate in the decision-making process in their families. Women have no control even over the money earned. This image of women's position in the economic sphere in India has become clear as we reach the twenty-first century.

CONCLUTION:

Gender gap in child mortality rate has reduced, girls' enrollment in schools has increased and women participation in organized sector has increased, but still in India we see a lack of people's attitude towards women. Government policies are very effective in empowering women but their implementation is ineffective. It is possible only if the mentality of people changes on women issue. The methods of working for economic empowerment cannot be uniform in all types of countries, for urban and rural environments or for literate and illiterate women. Government and civil society initiatives are important, but not sufficient. Establishing gender-responsive

budgets is essential for auditable and transparent gender-based economic policies. It is important to build the capacity of women in decision-making positions and to facilitate the discussion of gender issues within the political framework.

REFERENCES

1. International Journal of Recent Trends in Engineering & Research (IJRTER) Volume 02, Issue 11; November – 2016.
2. Indian Journal of Public Administration Vol. Lx, No. 3, July-September 2014
3. Women, employment and empowerment in Indian Economy By Gudipati Rajendera Kumar -THE HANS INDIA - Mar 20,2017
4. IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM) , Volume 17, Issue 4.
5. www.iosrjournals.org
6. Women Empowerment in India - Problems and Challenges" Author: Dr. Vipin Kumar Singhal, Sunrise Publications, Year: 2015
7. Annual Research Journal of SCMS, Pune Vol. 2, Issue 1, March 2014
8. Government of India. Annual Report to the People on Employment, Ministry of Labour and Employment, New Delhi, 2010.
9. Kirti Shrivas, "Role of Women Empowerment in Economic Growth in India." International Journal of Recent Trends in Engineering and Research, vol. 2, no. 11, 2016, pp. 177-179.
10. Gupta, R and Gupta, BK. "Role of Women in Economic Development." Yojana, vol. 31, no. 18, 1987, pp. 28-32

10

Women in Libraries: A Legacy of Achievement and a Path to Leadership

Dr. Nantu Acharjya

Abstract

This paper explores the historical journey of women in libraries, from their limited participation in the past to their increasing prominence in the present. It delves into the challenges faced by women librarians, including gender bias, stereotyping, work-life balance issues, and pay disparities. The paper also highlights strategies to empower women, such as mentorship, leadership training, and supportive work-life policies. It concludes by discussing the future of women in libraries, emphasizing their potential to shape the digital transformation, advance leadership roles, promote diversity and inclusion, foster community engagement, and ensure the sustainability of libraries.

Keywords*: Women in Libraries, Gender Equity, Library Leadership, Work-Life Balance, Digital Transformation, Diversity and Inclusion*

A Historical Perspective

The evolution of libraries is inextricably linked to the societal roles of women. For centuries, libraries were predominantly male-dominated spaces, reflecting the broader patriarchal norms of the time. However, as societal attitudes shifted and women gained greater access to education and employment, they began to make inroads into the library profession.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a significant turning point. Women's suffrage movements and growing educational opportunities paved the way for their entry into library schools and subsequent employment in libraries. Pioneering women like Melvil Dewey's wife, Annie R. Cutter, and Mary Wright Plummer played

crucial roles in shaping the field and advocating for women's professional advancement.

In India, the colonial era witnessed the establishment of libraries, primarily serving the needs of the British administration and the elite. Women's involvement in libraries during this period was limited, but with the advent of Indian independence and the subsequent expansion of education, more women began to enter the profession.

The Rise of Women in Libraries

The mid-20th century witnessed a significant increase in the number of women entering the library profession. One of the driving factors was the expansion of library science programs in universities and colleges, which made it easier for women to gain the necessary qualifications. These programs provided structured training, enabling women to develop skills in cataloging, research support, and library administration. In India, institutions like Banaras Hindu University and the University of Delhi became hubs for aspiring female librarians, opening pathways to professional growth.

Social Changes and Gender Roles

Post-World War II societal shifts played a crucial role in changing perceptions of women's roles. With men serving in the military and women stepping into the workforce during the war, professions like librarianship became more accessible to women. This trend continued even after the war, as societies began to recognize women's capabilities beyond domestic responsibilities. In India, the emphasis on education and literacy in the post-independence period further facilitated women's entry into the profession, particularly in urban areas.

Technological Advancements and New Roles

The advent of new technologies in the mid-20th century, including computers and automation systems, revolutionized library operations. These innovations created new roles, such as systems librarians and digital archivists, many of which were filled by women. Women demonstrated adaptability and eagerness to embrace these technological changes, which helped redefine their contributions to the field. By mastering emerging tools and systems, they positioned themselves as indispensable in modernizing library services.

Multifaceted Contributions

Women have brought significant value to libraries in diverse roles. As reference librarians, they have guided patrons in accessing information effectively. As catalogers, they have ensured systematic organization of library resources. In roles like children's librarians and community outreach coordinators, women have promoted literacy, lifelong learning, and community engagement. Their leadership in libraries has been essential in advancing access to information and fostering inclusive environments that serve a wide range of societal needs.

Challenges Faced by Women Librarians

Despite their significant contributions, women in libraries have faced numerous challenges throughout history. Some of the most common challenges include:

Gender Bias and Discrimination

Despite their significant contributions to the library profession, women librarians have historically faced gender bias and discrimination. These biases often manifest in hiring practices, career advancement opportunities, and workplace dynamics. Women have been passed over for promotions or excluded from leadership roles, even in environments where they constitute the majority of the workforce. This underrepresentation in managerial and decision-making positions reflects broader societal challenges where leadership is often associated with traditionally male characteristics. Subtle biases, such as assumptions about women's capabilities or commitment to their careers, further exacerbate these inequities, creating barriers to professional growth.

Stereotyping and Its Impact

Traditional stereotypes about women librarians have been pervasive, often portraying them as passive, nurturing, or subservient. While these qualities may align with the profession's historical emphasis on service and care, they undermine the diversity of women's roles and skills within the field. Such stereotypes can diminish their authority and credibility, especially when they occupy leadership or technical positions. For instance, women in technology-driven roles, such as systems librarians or digital archivists, may face skepticism about their expertise due to outdated perceptions. Overcoming these

stereotypes requires a shift in societal attitudes and greater visibility of women excelling in diverse and non-traditional roles within librarianship.

Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities

Work-life balance is a persistent challenge for women librarians, as they often juggle professional duties with family and caregiving responsibilities. This dual burden can lead to career interruptions, reduced working hours, or limited opportunities for skill enhancement and advancement. In India, where cultural norms often place a significant emphasis on women's roles as primary caregivers, this challenge is particularly pronounced. Women librarians may find it difficult to attend professional development programs, take on leadership roles, or engage in extended research projects due to their familial obligations. Supportive policies, such as flexible working hours and parental leave, are critical in addressing this issue.

Pay Disparity and Economic Inequities

In many cases, women librarians have faced pay disparities compared to their male counterparts, even when performing equivalent roles and responsibilities. This disparity is rooted in historical patterns of undervaluing women's work and the perception of librarianship as a "feminized" profession. Pay inequity not only affects women's financial stability but also perpetuates a lack of recognition for their contributions to the field. Transparent pay scales, regular salary audits, and advocacy for equal pay are essential steps in bridging this gap and ensuring economic justice for women in the profession.

Overcoming Challenges and Driving Change

Despite these challenges, women librarians have shown remarkable resilience and adaptability, continually striving for equity and recognition. Professional organizations and networks play a vital role in supporting women through mentorship, advocacy, and training programs. Additionally, societal attitudes toward gender roles in the workplace are gradually shifting, opening up new opportunities for women. By fostering inclusive environments, addressing systemic biases, and promoting policies that support work-life balance, the library profession can ensure that women are not only contributors but also leaders in shaping the future of libraries.

The Path to Leadership

In recent decades, women have made significant strides in achieving leadership positions in libraries. However, challenges remain. To further empower women in libraries and create a more equitable profession, the following strategies can be adopted:

Mentorship and Sponsorship

Mentorship programs are invaluable for empowering women in librarianship by providing guidance, support, and insights into career development. A mentor can help women identify opportunities for professional growth, navigate workplace challenges, and build confidence in their abilities. In addition to mentorship, sponsorship plays a critical role in women's career advancement. Unlike mentors who offer advice, sponsors actively advocate for women, recommending them for promotions, leadership roles, or challenging assignments. Sponsorship can be especially impactful in breaking through organizational hierarchies, helping women gain visibility and access to decision-makers. Together, mentorship and sponsorship create a supportive ecosystem that fosters women's success in the profession.

Leadership Training

Equipping women with leadership skills is essential for addressing the underrepresentation of women in managerial and executive roles in libraries. Leadership training programs can focus on developing critical competencies, such as strategic planning, conflict resolution, and team management. Workshops and seminars tailored to women's unique challenges in leadership can further enhance their readiness for such roles. For instance, training programs can address issues like assertiveness, negotiation skills, and overcoming imposter syndrome. In the Indian context, leadership training must also consider cultural sensitivities and workplace dynamics to effectively empower women librarians to take on influential positions.

Work-Life Balance Initiatives

Balancing work and family responsibilities remains a significant challenge for many women, especially in professions like librarianship, which may require extended hours or weekend commitments. Flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options, adjustable hours, and job-sharing, can provide women with the flexibility needed to manage their dual roles effectively. Additionally, institutions can offer

childcare support, such as on-site daycare facilities or financial subsidies for external childcare services. Family-friendly policies, such as paid parental leave and return-to-work programs, are equally crucial. By prioritizing work-life balance, libraries can retain talented women professionals and create an environment where they can thrive both personally and professionally.

Gender Equity Policies

The implementation of gender equity policies is vital for fostering a workplace that values fairness and inclusion. Equal pay for equal work should be a foundational principle, with regular audits to identify and address pay disparities. Anti-discrimination measures, including clear reporting mechanisms and consequences for bias, can create a safer and more supportive workplace. Furthermore, policies that prioritize diversity in hiring and promotions can ensure that women have equal access to opportunities. Libraries, as institutions of learning and equity, must lead by example in promoting gender equity, thereby reflecting the principles they espouse to their communities.

Networking and Advocacy

Building strong professional networks is crucial for women's career advancement in librarianship. Networking allows women to exchange ideas, share experiences, and gain access to resources and opportunities. Professional associations, workshops, and conferences provide platforms for women librarians to connect with peers and establish meaningful relationships. Advocacy, both individual and collective, is equally important. Women must be encouraged to voice their aspirations, negotiate for resources, and actively participate in organizational decision-making. In India, regional and national library associations can play a essential role in supporting women by offering platforms for advocacy and facilitating access to leadership opportunities, ultimately creating a robust professional community.

The Future of Women in Libraries

The future of women in libraries is promising. As libraries continue to evolve and adapt to the digital age, women are poised to play a central role in shaping their direction.

Shaping the Digital Transformation

The future of libraries is increasingly tied to the digital age, with technological advancements reshaping how information is stored,

accessed, and shared. Women in libraries are well-positioned to lead this transformation, bringing their unique perspectives and adaptability to the forefront. From developing digital repositories and managing virtual libraries to integrating artificial intelligence and machine learning into library systems, women can contribute to the modernization of library services. By acquiring skills in emerging technologies and leading initiatives in digital literacy, women librarians can ensure that libraries remain relevant and accessible to diverse communities in a rapidly evolving world.

Advancing Gender Representation in Leadership

Despite their numerical dominance in the profession, women are still underrepresented in leadership positions. The future holds the potential for breaking this glass ceiling by fostering a culture that supports women's leadership aspirations. Libraries can play a crucial role by implementing mentorship programs, creating leadership pipelines, and ensuring equal opportunities for women to assume roles as directors, chief librarians, and policy influencers. As women achieve greater representation in leadership, they will be able to shape policies, advocate for inclusivity, and drive innovation in library services, ensuring that libraries meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

Empowering women in libraries is not just about gender equality; it is about promoting diversity and inclusivity across the profession. Women, particularly those from marginalized communities, bring valuable perspectives and experiences that can enrich the services and programs offered by libraries. The future of libraries lies in their ability to cater to diverse audiences, and women can lead efforts to develop culturally relevant collections, inclusive programming, and outreach initiatives that reflect the needs of underserved populations. By championing diversity, women librarians can ensure that libraries remain welcoming and equitable spaces for all.

Fostering Community Engagement and Lifelong Learning

Women librarians have long been instrumental in promoting literacy, education, and community engagement. The future will see an expansion of these roles as libraries increasingly become hubs for lifelong learning and social interaction. Women can lead initiatives that focus on skill-building, career development, and personal growth for library users. Programs tailored to different age groups, such as

early literacy for children, digital skills for adults, and leisure activities for seniors, can further strengthen the library's role as a community center. Women's ability to connect with and understand community needs will be crucial in driving these efforts.

Ensuring Sustainability and Advocacy

As libraries face challenges such as funding cuts and changing user demands, women librarians can play a key role in advocating for their sustainability. Through effective communication and collaboration, women can champion the importance of libraries in preserving cultural heritage, promoting education, and fostering social equity. Their voices in policymaking and advocacy efforts can help secure resources and support for libraries in the future. Additionally, by leading initiatives in sustainability, such as green library practices and eco-friendly designs, women can align libraries with broader global goals of environmental responsibility and sustainable development.

Conclusion

The future of women in libraries is bright and filled with potential. By addressing current challenges and leveraging emerging opportunities, women can redefine the library profession, ensuring it remains innovative, inclusive, and impactful. Their leadership, creativity, and commitment will not only shape the future of libraries but also strengthen their role as essential institutions in an ever-changing world. Empowering women in libraries is a step toward a more equitable profession and a brighter future for the communities that libraries serve. By addressing the challenges and embracing opportunities, women can achieve greater representation in leadership positions and make significant contributions to the field. The success of women in libraries is not only a matter of gender equality but also a matter of ensuring that libraries are inclusive, diverse, and responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. By empowering women, we can create a brighter future for libraries and the people they serve.

References

M.P., Sarah. (n.d.). Feminist Thinking and Librarianship in the 1990s: Issues and Challenges. Retrieved from https: / / www.ala.org / srrt / feminist-task-force / feminist-thinking-and-librarianship-1990s

Spencer-Bennett, Kate (2015). Women and Libraries: Dangerous? Wholesome? Safe? EHNE Encyclopedia. Retrieved from https: / / ehne.fr / en / encyclopedia / themes / education-teaching-and-professional-training / out-scholl-learning / women-and-libraries-dangerous-wholesome-safe

Keer, G. (2015). Women's History Month in the Library. American Libraries Magazine. Retrieved from https: / / research.dom.edu / blogs / system / Womens-History-Month-in-the-Library

Pritchard, S. M. (2012). Library History and Women's History: An Ongoing Convergence. American Libraries Magazine. Retrieved from https: / / americanlibrariesmagazine.org / 2012 / 02 / 29 / library-history-and-womens-history-an-ongoing-convergence /

11

Unlocking Potential: The Indispensable Role of Women's Financial Inclusion in Developing Economies

Nilendu Chatterjee

Abstract

This research paper investigates the critical role of financial inclusion for women in driving economic growth and development within developing economies. We analyze existing literature to examine the multifaceted impacts of financial inclusion on women's empowerment, household welfare, and broader societal progress. The analysis explores the various pathways through which financial inclusion operates, considering both the direct effects of access to financial services and the indirect impacts on women's agency, decision-making power, and participation in the formal economy. Furthermore, we identify key challenges and barriers hindering women's financial inclusion, including cultural norms, legal discrimination, limited access to technology, and inadequate financial literacy. The paper concludes by proposing policy recommendations to promote greater financial inclusion for women, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions, supportive regulatory frameworks, and collaborative efforts between governments, financial institutions, and civil society organizations.

Keywords: *Economy, cultural norms, women's agency, decision-making power, participation*

1. Introduction:

In the global pursuit of sustainable development and economic prosperity, the financial inclusion of women in developing economies stands as a cornerstone. It is not merely a matter of equity; it is a powerful catalyst for poverty reduction, economic growth, and societal

advancement. When women have access to financial tools and opportunities, the benefits ripple outwards, transforming not only their lives but also the well-being of their families, communities, and nations. This paper will explore the critical importance of financial inclusion for women in developing economies, highlighting its diverse impacts and underscoring the urgent need for continued efforts in this arena.

Financial inclusion, at its core, refers to the ability of individuals and businesses to access and utilize affordable and appropriate financial services, including savings, credit, payments, and insurance. For women in developing economies, where social and cultural barriers often intersect with economic vulnerabilities, this access is often severely limited. This exclusion perpetuates a cycle of poverty and hinders their ability to fully participate in and contribute to the economy.

Financial inclusion, defined as the access to and utilization of a broad range of formal financial services at affordable costs, is widely recognized as a crucial driver of economic growth and poverty reduction (en, 2012), (Mishra, 2024). However, the benefits of financial inclusion are not universally distributed. A significant gender gap persists globally, with women in developing countries disproportionately excluded from the formal financial system (Demirg-Kunt, 2013), (Mpofu, 2023), (Safavian, 2013). This exclusion has profound implications for women's empowerment, household welfare, and the overall economic development of these nations. This paper examines the significance of financial inclusion for women in developing economies, exploring its multifaceted impacts, challenges, and potential policy responses.

Financial inclusion of women in developing economies is a critical factor in fostering sustainable economic growth and reducing gender inequality. This multifaceted issue encompasses various aspects of financial services and their impact on women's empowerment, family welfare, and overall societal progress. By providing women with access to a comprehensive range of financial services, including savings accounts, credit facilities, insurance products, and digital payment systems, countries can unlock significant economic potential that has long been underutilized.

The importance of financial inclusion for women extends beyond mere access to banking services. It serves as a catalyst for empowering

women to initiate and expand businesses, thereby contributing to job creation and economic diversification. This entrepreneurial empowerment is particularly crucial in developing economies, where small and medium-sized enterprises often form the backbone of the economy. When women have access to credit and financial support, they can invest in their businesses, scale operations, and compete more effectively in local and global markets.

Furthermore, financial inclusion enables women to make strategic investments in education and healthcare for their families. This has far-reaching implications for human capital development and long-term economic growth. By having control over financial resources, women can prioritize spending on children's education, preventive healthcare, and nutrition, which are all critical factors in breaking the cycle of poverty and fostering intergenerational mobility.

The impact of women's financial inclusion on household financial management is equally significant. With access to formal financial services, women can better budget, save, and plan for future expenses. This improved financial literacy and management at the household level contributes to greater financial stability and resilience, particularly in low-income families where economic shocks can have severe consequences.

Moreover, financial inclusion enhances women's financial independence and decision-making power within their communities. This shift in economic dynamics can lead to broader social changes, challenging traditional gender roles and promoting gender equality in various spheres of life. As women gain more control over financial resources, they often experience increased respect and influence in community decision-making processes, further amplifying their positive impact on society.

Numerous studies have corroborated the positive effects of women's financial inclusion on overall societal welfare. Research consistently shows that when women have control over financial resources, they tend to allocate a higher proportion of funds towards family welfare, education, and nutrition compared to men. This spending pattern creates positive ripple effects throughout society, improving health outcomes, educational attainment, and overall quality of life for families and communities.

2. The Multifaceted Impacts of Financial Inclusion for Women:

Financial inclusion for women operates through various pathways, impacting their lives and contributing to broader societal development.

2.1. Economic Empowerment:

Access to financial services empowers women economically by providing them with the tools to manage their finances effectively (Singh, 2023), (Siddik, 2017), (Adera, 2023). This includes access to credit for business ventures, enabling them to participate more fully in the formal economy (Fareed, 2017), (Safavian, 2013). Studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between financial inclusion and women's economic empowerment, leading to increased income, improved business performance, and enhanced livelihoods (Bhatia, 2019), (M., 2023). The ability to save and invest also facilitates long-term economic security and reduces reliance on informal, often exploitative, credit sources (Djaowe, 2022), (Bongomin, 2024). This is particularly relevant in rural areas where access to formal financial institutions is limited (Das, 2017). The positive impact of microfinance initiatives, in particular, on women's economic empowerment has been well-documented (Kashyap, 2010), (R.I, 2020). These initiatives often involve Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which provide a platform for collective savings and lending, fostering social capital and economic resilience (Raj Mohan, 2023). The success of SHG-bank linkage programs in India, for example, highlights the potential of community-based approaches to enhance financial inclusion and women's empowerment (Basu, 2005).

2.2. Household Welfare:

Financial inclusion for women has a significant positive impact on household welfare (Dawood, 2019), (Swamy, 2019). Increased income generated through business ventures or improved financial management translates into better nutrition, healthcare, and education for family members (Siddik, 2017), (Mishra, 2024). Women's control over household finances enables them to make informed decisions about resource allocation, prioritizing investments in children's education and health (Doss, 2013), (Acosta, 2006). This contributes to improved health outcomes, reduced child mortality, and enhanced human capital development (Kashyap, 2010). Furthermore, women's access to financial resources enhances their ability to cope with economic shocks and crises, acting as a buffer against poverty and vulnerability (Swamy, 2019), (Costa, 2015).

2.3. Social and Political Empowerment:

Financial inclusion empowers women beyond the economic sphere (Bhatia, 2019), (M., 2023). Improved financial standing enhances women's confidence and self-esteem, leading to greater participation in social and political decision-making processes (Attwood, 2022), (Mutua, 2021). Increased economic independence can challenge traditional gender roles and norms, contributing to a more equitable distribution of power within households and communities (Hallward Driemeier, 2012), (Chikwe, 2024). Access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), facilitated by financial inclusion, further empowers women by providing them with access to knowledge, networks, and opportunities for skill development (Mpofu, 2023), (Ozili, 2024).

2.4. Sustainable Development Goals:

Financial inclusion for women is directly linked to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Mpofu, 2023), (Pandey, 2023). Economic empowerment of women is explicitly addressed in SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Improved health and education outcomes, facilitated by increased household income and resource allocation, contribute to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). Reduced poverty and vulnerability, achieved through financial resilience, directly supports SDG 1 (No Poverty). The interconnectedness of these SDGs highlights the far-reaching impact of financial inclusion for women on achieving broader development goals.

2.5. Improved Health and Education Outcomes:

The link between women's financial inclusion and improved health and education outcomes is undeniable. When women have access to savings and insurance, they are better equipped to afford healthcare services for themselves and their families, leading to improved health indicators and reduced mortality rates. Similarly, financial resources enable them to invest in their children's education, breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Educated children, particularly girls, are more likely to be healthy, productive members of society, further contributing to long-term economic development.

2.6. Fueling Entrepreneurship and Innovation:

Women are often resourceful and innovative entrepreneurs, particularly in the informal sector of developing economies. However,

lack of access to finance often stifles their potential. Financial inclusion provides the necessary capital and tools for women entrepreneurs to formalize their businesses, access larger markets, and innovate. Supporting women-led businesses is not just a matter of fairness; it is a strategic imperative for economic growth. These businesses can create employment opportunities, introduce new products and services, and contribute significantly to overall economic dynamism.

3. Challenges and Barriers to Women's Financial Inclusion:

Despite its immense potential, several challenges hinder women's access to and utilization of formal financial services in developing economies.

3.1. Socio-cultural Barriers:

Deep-rooted cultural norms and traditions often restrict women's economic autonomy and access to financial resources (Demirg-Kunt, 2013), (Mpofu, 2023), (Attwood, 2022). In many societies, women's decision-making power within households is limited, and they may lack the authority to open bank accounts or access credit independently (Safavian, 2013). Gender-based violence and discrimination further exacerbate these challenges, creating an unsafe and unsupportive environment for women's financial participation (Demirg-Kunt, 2013), (Mutua, 2021).

3.2. Legal Discrimination:

Legal frameworks in some developing countries may explicitly or implicitly discriminate against women, restricting their property rights, inheritance rights, and access to credit (Hallward Driemeier, 2012), (Demirg-Kunt, 2013). These legal barriers limit women's ability to use financial services effectively and participate fully in the economy (Safavian, 2013). The lack of legal recognition of women's economic activities also contributes to their exclusion from formal financial systems.

3.3. Limited Access to Technology:

The rapid expansion of digital financial services (DFS) offers significant opportunities to enhance financial inclusion (Mpofu, 2023), (Klein, 2011), (Adeniran, 2024). However, limited access to technology, particularly mobile phones and internet connectivity, remains a significant barrier for women in many developing countries (Ozili, 2024), (Tyagi, 2015). The digital divide exacerbates existing inequalities,

leaving women in rural and marginalized communities further excluded from the benefits of DFS.

3.4. Inadequate Financial Literacy:

Low levels of financial literacy represent a significant obstacle to women's effective use of financial services (Fareed, 2017), (Bongomin, 2024). Lack of understanding of basic financial concepts, such as budgeting, saving, and credit management, limits women's ability to make informed financial decisions and benefit from financial products (Singh, 2023), (Siddik, 2017), (Tyagi, 2015). This is particularly true for women with limited education, who are disproportionately represented among the financially excluded.

4. Policy Recommendations:

Addressing the challenges and barriers to women's financial inclusion requires a multi-pronged approach involving policy interventions, institutional reforms, and collaborative efforts.

- Developing tailored financial products and services: Products designed specifically for women's needs, considering their income patterns, business types, and cultural contexts.
- Leveraging technology: Utilizing mobile banking and digital financial services to reach women in remote areas and overcome geographical barriers.
- Promoting financial literacy and entrepreneurship training: Equipping women with the knowledge and skills to manage their finances and run successful businesses.
- Strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks: Ensuring women's equal access to financial services and addressing discriminatory practices.

Collaborating with community leaders and influencers: Engaging with local leaders to address social and cultural barriers and promote the importance of women's financial inclusion.

We shall discuss these aspects briefly.

4.1. Targeted Interventions:

Policymakers need to design and implement tailored interventions that address the specific needs and circumstances of women in different contexts (Adera, 2023), (Kazemikhasragh, 2022), (Phil-Ugochukwu, 2024). This includes developing gender-sensitive

financial products and services that cater to women's unique economic activities and risk profiles (Safavian, 2013), (Bongomin, 2024). Microfinance initiatives, tailored to women's needs, have proven effective in promoting financial inclusion and empowerment (Kashyap, 2010).

4.2. Supportive Regulatory Frameworks:

Regulatory frameworks need to be designed to promote financial inclusion and protect women from exploitation (Klein, 2011), (Ghezal, 2020), (Adeniran, 2024). This includes strengthening consumer protection measures, ensuring fair pricing and transparency in financial services, and promoting competition among financial institutions (Ard, 2011), (Bongomin, 2024). Regulations should also address the specific vulnerabilities faced by women, such as gender-based violence and discrimination. The development of appropriate legal frameworks that protect women's property and inheritance rights is crucial for enhancing their ability to access and utilize financial services (Hallward Driemeier, 2012), (Demirg-Kunt, 2013).

4.3. Collaboration and Partnerships:

Promoting financial inclusion for women requires collaborative efforts between governments, financial institutions, and civil society organizations (Adera, 2023), (Mutua, 2021), (Adeniran, 2024). Governments can play a crucial role in creating an enabling environment through policy reforms, investment in infrastructure, and promotion of financial literacy programs (Tyagi, 2015). Financial institutions need to develop innovative financial products and services that cater to women's needs and reach out to underserved communities (Fareed, 2017), (Bongomin, 2024). Civil society organizations can play a vital role in raising awareness, providing education and training, and advocating for women's rights and empowerment (Chikwe, 2024), (Mutua, 2021).

4.4. Leveraging Technology:

The potential of DFS to overcome geographical barriers and enhance access to financial services for women should be fully exploited (Mpofu, 2023), (Ozili, 2024), (Adeniran, 2024). Investment in digital infrastructure, including mobile network expansion and internet connectivity, is crucial for bridging the digital divide (Tyagi, 2015). Furthermore, promoting financial literacy programs that focus on the use of digital financial technologies is essential for empowering women to utilize DFS effectively.

5. Conclusion:

The financial inclusion of women in developing economies is not merely a desirable outcome; it is an imperative for achieving sustainable and equitable development. By providing women with access to financial tools and opportunities, we unlock their immense potential as economic actors, empowering them to improve their lives, contribute to their communities, and drive national progress. Continued investment and focused efforts in this area are essential to build a more just and prosperous future for all. The economic empowerment of women is not just a matter of fairness; it is a smart economic strategy that benefits everyone. Financial inclusion for women is not merely an economic imperative; it is a fundamental aspect of broader development agendas. By empowering women financial inclusion contributes to poverty reduction, improved household welfare, and the achievement of sustainable development goals. However, realizing the full potential of financial inclusion requires addressing the multifaceted challenges and barriers that disproportionately affect women. The policy recommendations outlined in this paper highlight the need for targeted interventions, supportive regulatory frameworks, and collaborative efforts to create an enabling environment for women's financial participation. Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of different interventions in diverse contexts and to monitor the progress toward greater financial inclusion for women in developing economies. A focus on empowering women through financial inclusion is not only a matter of justice and equality but also a powerful strategy for achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The significant body of research reviewed in this paper provides ample evidence to support this assertion and underscores the importance of sustained and focused efforts in this critical area of development.

The impact of women's financial inclusion on global economic growth is substantial. According to some estimates, achieving gender parity in financial inclusion could add trillions of dollars to global GDP. This economic boost would come from increased productivity, higher labor force participation, and the growth of women-owned businesses.

As we look to the future, the importance of women's financial inclusion in developing economies will only grow. With the rapid pace of technological advancement and the changing nature of work, ensuring that women have equal access to financial services and

economic opportunities will be crucial for building resilient, inclusive, and prosperous societies. By continuing to prioritize and invest in women's financial inclusion, developing economies can unlock a powerful engine of growth and social progress.

References:

Acosta, P. (2006). Labor supply, school attendance, and remittances from international migration: the case of el salvador. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1596 / 1813-9450-3903

Adeniran, I. A., Abhulimen, A. O., Obiki-Osafiele, A. N., Osundare, O. S., Agu, E. E., & Efunniyi, C. P. (2024). Global perspectives on fintech: empowering smes and women in emerging markets for financial inclusion. International Journal of Frontline Research in Multidisciplinary Studies. https: / / doi.org / 10.56355 / ijfrms.2024.3.2.0027

Adera, A. & Abdisa, L. (2023). Financial inclusion and womens economic empowerment: evidence from ethiopia. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1080 / 23322039.2023.2244864

Ard, O. P., Heimann, M., & Mylenko, N. (2011). Access to financial services and the financial inclusion agenda around the world: a cross-country analysis with a new data set. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1596 / 1813-9450-5537

Attwood, F. (2022). Editorial. Journal of Gender Studies. https: / / doi.org / 10.1080 / 09589236.2022.2047354

Basu, P. & Srivastava, P. (2005). Scaling-up microfinance for India's rural poor. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1596 / 1813-9450-3646

Bhatia, S. & Singh, S. (2019). Empowering women through financial inclusion: a study of urban slum. Vikalpa The Journal for Decision Makers. https: / / doi.org / 10.1177 / 0256090919897809

Bongomin, G. O. C., Semukono, F., Yourougou, P., & Balinda, R. (2024). Replicating the suitability rule and economic theory in pursuit of microfinance inclusion of women micro-agribusinesses in rural financial markets. Journal of Agribusiness in Developing and Emerging Economies. https: / / doi.org / 10.1108 / jadee-07-2023-0162

Chikwe, C. F., Kuteesa, K. N., & Ediae, A. A. (2024). Gender equality advocacy and socio-economic inclusion: a comparative study of community-based approaches in promoting womens empowerment and economic resilience (2022). International Journal of Scientific Research Updates. https: / / doi.org / 10.53430 / ijsru.2024.8.2.0066

Costa, A. & Ehrbeck, T. (2015). A market-building approach to financial inclusion. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1162 / inov_a_00229

Dawood, T. C., Pratama, H., Masbar, R., & Effendi, R. (2019). Does financial inclusion alleviate household poverty? empirical evidence from indonesia. Centre of Sociological Research, Szczecin, Poland. https: / / doi.org / 10.14254 / 2071-789x.2019 / 12-2 / 14

Demirg-Kunt, A., Klapper, L., & Singer, D. (2013). Financial inclusion and legal discrimination against women: evidence from developing countries. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1596 / 1813-9450-6416

Djaowe, J. & TIKU, L. A. (2022). Mobile money and financial inclusion of rural women in the informal sector: a case of users of orange money in yagoua.. Archives of Business Research. https: / / doi.org / 10.14738 / abr.106.11911

Doss, C. R. (2013). Intrahousehold bargaining and resource ocation in developing countries. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1596 / 1813-9450-6337

en, F., Demirg-Kunt, A., Klapper, L., & Pera, M. S. M. (2012). The foundations of financial inclusion: understanding ownership and use of formal accounts. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1596 / 1813-9450-6290

Fareed, F., Gabriel, M., Lenain, P., & Reynaud, J. (2017). Financial inclusion and women entrepreneurship. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1787 / 2fbd0f35-en

Ghezal, M. & Chiad, F. (2020). Adopting mobile banking technology to achieve financial inclusion in islamic countries. None. https: / / doi.org / None

Hallward Driemeier, M. & Hasan, T. (2012). Empowering women. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1596 / 978-0-8213-9533-2

Kashyap, A. (2010). Sustainable micro-finance for women''s empowerment: a crucial instrument for human development initiatives. None. https: / / doi.org / None

Kazemikhasragh, A. & Pineda, M. V. B. (2022). Financial inclusion and education: an empirical study of financial inclusion in the face of the pandemic emergency due to covid19 in latin america and the caribbean. Review of Development Economics. https: / / doi.org / 10.1111 / rode.12884

Klein, M. & Mayer, C. (2011). Mobile banking and financial inclusion: the regulatory lessons. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1596 / 1813-9450-5664

M., & -, S. J. (2023). A case study on status of financial inclusion of women in uttar pradesh, india. International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research. https: / / doi.org / 10.36948 / ijfmr.2023.v05i01.1568

Mishra, D., Kandpal, V., Agarwal, N., & Srivastava, B. (2024). Financial inclusion and its ripple effects on socio-economic development: a comprehensive review. Journal of Risk and Financial Management. https: / / doi.org / 10.3390 / jrfm17030105

Mpofu, F. Y. (2023). Gender disparity and digital financial inclusion in advancing the attainment of sustainable development goals in developing countries. International Journal of Innovation in Management Economics and Social Sciences. https: / / doi.org / 10.59615 / ijimes.3.3.49

Mutua, J. & Juster, N. G. (2021). Effects of financial inclusion and awareness creation on women empowerment in kalawa ward, makueni county-kenya. JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS. https: / / doi.org / 10.53819 / 81018102t4021

Ozili, P. K. (2024). Women digital financial inclusion and economic growth in nigeria. Journal of Internet and Digital Economics. https: / / doi.org / 10.1108 / jide-07-2024-0027

Pandey, T. D. (2023). Impact of financial inclusion on human development index: special reference to brics countries. BRICS Journal of Economics. https: / / doi.org / 10.3897 / brics-econ.4.e96288

Phil-Ugochukwu, A. I. (2024). Informal financial savings practices to facilitate formal financial inclusion. World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews. https: / / doi.org / 10.30574 / wjarr.2024.24.3.3779

PragabhalDas, K. (2017). Financial inclusion through kudumbasree programme. None. https: / / doi.org / None

R.I, U. (2020). Access to credit on the growth of women entrepreneurs in jos, plateau state: the influence of financial support services. International Journal of social Sciences and Economic Review. https: / / doi.org / 10.36923 / ijsser.v2i1.51

RajMohan, D. P. & Pentkar, M. A. (2023). Role of shgs in women empowerment at Karnataka, Hyderabad.. https: / / doi.org / 10.52783 / tjjpt.v44.i4.1556

Safavian, M. S. & Haq, A. (2013). Are pakistan''s women entrepreneurs being served by the microfinance sector?. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.1596 / 978-0-8213-9833-3

Siddik, M. N. A. (2017). Does financial inclusion promote women empowerment? evidence from bangladesh. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.11114 / aef.v4i4.2514

Singh, P. K. & Singh, K. (2023). Financial inclusion- a front wheel for womens empowerment. International Journal of Advanced Research. https: / / doi.org / 10.21474 / ijar01 / 17027

Swamy, V. (2019). Financial inclusion and the resilience of poor households. https: / / doi.org / 10.1353 / JDA.2018.0079

Tyagi, P., Purohit, H., & Choudhary, N. (2015). Financial inclusion: initiatives of modi-led-government. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.2139 / SSRN.2666942

12

Women's Empowerment in India: Issues and Challenges

Dr. Nemai Chandra Das

Abstract

'Women Empowerment' has emerged as an important area of great concern at the national and international level. The concept of 'Women Empowerment' encompasses the overall development of women. Giving women the authority and control to make their own decisions and affect societal change is known as women's empowerment. Women must identify with self - esteem and confidence. Women's empowerment may be measured by the confident smile on their faces. It is a basic human right for women. One of the most significant issues of the twenty-first century is the empowerment of women. The most prevalent crimes that women now face include rape, dowry, sexual harassment, kidnapping, rough treatment by husbands or family members, attack on a woman, and sex trafficking. The government has implemented numerous enterprise programs and passed numerous laws that give women a number of rights and protections. The most crucial and fundamental instrument for women's empowerment is education. It educates women about their rights. This paper was conducted to determine what issues and challenges women face in achieving empowerment on all fronts.

Keywords: *Women, Empowerment, Awareness, Issues and Challenges*

Introduction:

Empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in our society in recent time. The history of women is not linear, nor does it have a well organized structure. The status of women in India has evolved from ancient times where women enjoyed a relatively high status, through the medieval period where patriarchal norms solidified, to the colonial era where reform movements began

addressing women's rights. Despite progress, many historical inequalities persist today. Women's duties as good daughters, good wives and good mothers are well-defined in the Indian patriarchal society. Women empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women. To ensure equal right to women, to make them confident, freely live their life with self respect and self dignity. Empowerment aspect visualizes the full participation of people in the decision making process that shapes their lives. The goal of inclusive growth and human development cannot be achieved without the development and empowerment of women.

The World Bank studies have shown that enhancement of women's earnings would have a more profound effect on the on the welfare of the family as a whole since "increase in women's income result more directly" into better education, health and nutrition for children. The United Nations Decade for Women (1975-85) helped focus public attention on the important role women can and do play in socio-economic development. Women's empowerment in India has been a topic of considerable debate and activism. It encompasses ensuring women have equal rights, opportunities, and the ability to participate fully in societal, economic, and political life. However, various obstacles continue to hinder the realization of these goals.

Objective of the study:

1. To study the issues and challenges on women empowerment.
2. To suggest possible measures on women empowerment.

Women's empowerment in India is a significant and multi-faceted issue. It involves various dimensions including social, economic, political, and legal aspects. Here's a comprehensive overview of the issues and challenges faced in this domain:

Gender Disparities in Education and Employment:

Access to education is one of the primary tools for women's empowerment. However, gender disparities in literacy rates remain significant. Women in India face significant barriers when it comes to accessing education and employment. For example, data from the World Bank shows that only around 50% of women in India participate in the labour force, compared to around 80% of men. This is due in part to cultural and social barriers that prevent women from participating in the workforce, as well as lack of access to education and training.

Workplace Inequality:

Women's participation in the workforce remains low due to various factors including societal expectations, lack of education, and workplace discrimination. Many women are engaged in unpaid labor or work in informal sectors without any social security benefits.

The professional realm in India often mirrors deeply ingrained gender bias. Women frequently encounter challenges such as unequal pay, limited career growth opportunities, and workplace harassment. Shifting the paradigm requires not only policy changes but also a transformation in societal attitudes toward women in the workforce. Companies must embrace diversity and inclusion initiatives, providing equal opportunities for women to thrive in their careers.

Violence against Women:

Gender-based violence is a major problem in India. Violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and human trafficking, is a pervasive issue in India. Cultural norms, legal loopholes, and lack of awareness or support systems often leave women vulnerable and without recourse.

Child Marriage and Dowry System:

Deep-rooted cultural practices like child marriage and the dowry system continue to adversely impact the lives of young girls. Eradicating these practices necessitates comprehensive societal efforts, including educational programs, legal reforms, and community engagement. Empowering young girls with education and skills can disrupt these harmful traditions.

Health and Nutrition:

Women in India face numerous health challenges, including inadequate access to healthcare, maternal mortality, and malnutrition. Discrimination and neglect in health matters start from birth and continue through life, impacting their overall well-being and life expectancy. Women in rural areas often face inadequate healthcare facilities and insufficient awareness about reproductive health. Bridging these gaps requires enhancing healthcare infrastructure, education, and promoting gender-sensitive health policies. Initiatives focusing on maternal healthcare, family planning, and awareness campaigns can contribute to improving women's health outcomes.

Political Participation:

Women's representation in political institutions remains low despite reservation policies. Issues like electoral violence, lack of support, and cultural stigmas prevent many women from participating in politics. Encouraging women's participation in politics is crucial for a more inclusive and representative democracy. Reserved seats, mentorship programs, and awareness campaigns can facilitate increased female participation in political spheres.

Cyber security Concerns:

With the increasing digitalization, women also face challenges related to online safety. Cyber bullying and online harassment are issues that need attention, and fostering digital literacy is crucial to address these concerns. Legal frameworks for tackling online harassment should be strengthened, and educational programs on digital safety should be integrated into school curricula.

Constitutional Provision:

Constitutional Provisions for Empowering Women in India Equality before law for all persons (Article-14). Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 15(I)). However, special provisions may be made by the state in favors of women and children Article 15(3). Equality of opportunity for all citizens relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state (Article 16).State policy to be directed to securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a); (v) equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d).Provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief (Article 42). Promotion of harmony by every citizen of India and renouncement of such practices which are derogatory to the dignity of women Article 51A (e). Reservation of not less than one-third of total seats for women in direct election to local bodies, viz; Panchayats and Municipalities (Articles 343(d) and 343 (T).

Conclusion:

Women's empowerment in India is a complex issue that requires a multi-pronged approach. Various government schemes aim to promote women's empowerment, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, and the Mahila E-Haat initiative. These programs focus on education, health, economic empowerment,

and legal rights. While significant progress has been made, much remains to be done to ensure that all women have the opportunity to lead empowered, autonomous, and fulfilling lives. Continued efforts from the government, civil society, and individuals are crucial in overcoming the challenges and achieving true gender equality. NGOs play a crucial role in advocating for women's rights and providing services such as education, healthcare, legal aid, and vocational training. They often work at the grassroots level, addressing local issues and empowering women directly. Grassroots movements and campaigns, such as the MeToo public spotlight, leading to greater awareness and advocacy for change.

References:

1. Desai, Neera and Thakkar Usha (2001) Women in Indian Society, New Delhi: National Book Trust.
2. Parvin, M. Razia (2012). Empowerment of Women: Strategies and Systems for Gender Justice, New Delhi: Dominant Publishers.
3. Dutta, R.K (2003). Women Epowerment, New Delhi: Reference Press.
4. Shashi kumar, R. (2008). 'Women Empowerment in India: Deficiencies, Imbalances and Required Changes', In (Ed.) V.S. Ganesamurtyh, Empowerment of Women in India- Social, Economic and Political. New Delhi: New Century Publications. pp.1-30.
5. Devi, R.S. and A. Rajesh Kannan (2008). 'Socio-economic Statusof Women in India', In (Ed.) V.S. Ganesamurtyh, Empowerment of Women in India- Social, Economic and Political. New Delhi: New Century Publications. pp.31-54.
6. Ponraj, P. and Gnanaguru, K.(2016). 'Women Empowerment in India', Shanlax International Journal of Commerce, October, Volume 4, Issue 4, pp-55-58.
7. Mushahary, Ringkamg (2022). 'Issues and Challenges on Women Empowerment', International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR), October, Volume 11, Issue 19, pp-1108-1111.

13

Appraising Women's Position in context of Gender Discrimination: A Constitutional Analysis

Nirmal Kumar Sahoo

Abstract

The issue of women concerning their rights, dignity and security is one of the most alarming and sensitive issues in today's changed global context and so also in India. This happens not due to women's well protection and security but because of their naked violation of rights & dignity day by day. The evidence is clear everywhere that the voice of women is being increasingly heard in the streets, courts and Parliaments, and even largely displayed in daily social media. Yet measures concerning women's issues are not given priority in society. Women always constitute an important segment of any kind of society, be it primitive or modern, agricultural or industrial. Their sacrifice and contributions for the development of society cannot be ignored. Thus, an analysis of the role of women in society throws light on the complex problem of their participation in different aspects of life. Of all the aspects of relationship between women and society, it is women's rights, dignity, security and empowerment in various fields like social, political, educational and economic that has received the most sustained attention from the feminists, social thinkers, human rights' activists and political scientists around the globe.

In this piece of theoretical paper, an attempt has been made to explain the women's rights & empowerment in general and to assess the role, status & position of women in India in special from a constitutional perspective in context of their gender discrimination.

Keywords: *Alarming Issue, Global Context, Courts, Parliaments, Women's Rights & Empowerment, Constitutional Perspective*

Introductory Background: Any issue of women relating to their rights, dignity and security is one of the most sensitive as well as alarming issues in today's changed global context. This is not because of the fact that they are well protected and well secured but because that they are physically & mentally tortured and their rights are nakedly violated day by day. The evidence is clear everywhere that the voice of women is being increasingly heard in the streets, courts and Parliaments, and even largely displayed in daily social media, yet actions concerning women's protection are not given so much priority. The "Abhaya" case of a trainee doctor at R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital on 9th August, 2024 in Kolkata may be cited as a recent example which not only shooked every corner of the society irrespective of any caste, class, sex, religion, party etc. but also aroused a massive protest in arresting the culprits and imparting proper justice to the victim. There is no doubt that women always constitute an important segment of any kind of society, be it primitive or modern, agricultural or industrial. Thus, of all the aspects of relationship between women and society, it is women's role, participation, status and the enjoyment of their rights in various fields like social, political, educational, economic, religious, cultural and so on that has received the most sustained attention from the social thinkers, human rights' experts, feminists and political scientists in present era. It is women's progress through which the development of a society can be measured. To quote B.R. Ambedkar, "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved". However, while women in the West fought for a century to get their basic rights such as right to vote; women in India were at an advantageous position in this respect since the Constitution provided equal rights to both men and women from the very beginning of its enforcement.

Statement of the Problem - The twenty first century has been a world-wide revolution in the extension of all kinds of rights to women such as social, political, economic, educational etc. But more than a century ago there was hardly any country in the world where women were guaranteed the right to participate in politics on an equal basis with men. Even still today in many countries an enormous disparity exists between women's formal political equality and their meaningful exercise of political power. The near universal recognition of political rights and the strength of their voting numbers are no where reflected in their direct role in government. In many countries women's participation in the most fundamental political activities such as voting,

attending meetings, campaigning and contesting in the elections etc. falls far short of that of men.

In this piece of theoretical paper an attempt has been made to analyze the role of women in the world in general at different phases of time and to assess their political status and position in India in specific from a constitutional viewpoint in context of their gender discrimination.

It is a wrong notion that women have to fight with men in order to obtain their rights. The enjoyment of rights should be viewed as a cry for change in society - a change in concept, structure and nature of the institutions that constitute society. In a society where definitions, policies and rules are male-oriented, the need is to understand women and their rightful place in society. Their role have become not only a necessity but also a base on which the new society and civilizations are being constructed. The need to define, understand and implement women's rights gained global recognition during the International Decade for Women from 1976 to 1985.

Since ancient times women are facing so many problems. Their oppression is persistent and universal but its solutions are complicated. Many prophets of women's emancipation have come and gone but discrimination against women and violation of women's rights persists. The earliest treatises on the idea of equality between the sexes appeared in 1792 in the highly charged atmosphere of debate over the French Revolution and the American War of Independence. Three quarters of a century later, John Stuart Mill, best described as a 'liberal feminist', provided equal opportunities for women to prove themselves in public life. However, the recognition of women's rights became international law when the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

In recent years there has been an alarming increase of dowry deaths, sexual violence and harassment of women which reveals a large-scale societal break down. Women's position is worsening practically in every sphere with a slight exception in the field of education and employment. The manifestation of gender violence may differ in different socio-economic and cultural settings but its impact, intensity and consequences on women remain the same. It is found that due to New Economic policy (NEP), and the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), women have been marginalized not only

economically but politically and socially too. The process of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization has most adversely affected women collectively as well as individually irrespective of their class, creed, economic status or their educational level. Some of the strongest constraints on women are also deeply rooted in religion. For instance, both Judaism and Islamism as patriarchal religions place limitations on women's roles. In addition, secular, moral and ethical codes also act to limit women's lives. One of the tenets of Confucianism requires three obediences of women: to the father during her girlhood, to the husband when married and to the son in old age. A similar situation can be seen in Manu's definition of the status of a Hindu woman.

Position of Women: A Global Perspective - The status of women was almost same throughout the world until the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in England. In Greek states, while woman was a subject of admiration for her grace and motherly qualities, she was completely subordinated to man. It was the great Greek philosopher Plato who said that there should be complete equality between the sexes. The position of women was no better in the Roman Empire too. In the feudal societies, however, one finds a special status accorded to women in society. The civilization of China, India, Rome and the various renaissances of Western Europe could boast of small group of highly cultivated women. From the middle of the 19th century there has been a significant progress towards equality in the areas of education, suffrage, property rights and the right to enter the professions and public life. In short, industrialization accelerated the growth of two social movements - one for democracy and equality and the other for socialism and natural justice. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, waves of these ideologies reverberated in society.

International Conferences before World War-I did not attempt to deal with the full legal position of women, but conventions between 1902 and 1910 dealt with problems affecting women. In 1935, the League of Nations authorized a report on aspects of the status of women, but World War - II interrupted further work. When the United Nations was established in 1945, only about half of the 51 members had extended franchise to women and the Commission at first concentrated on the political rights which were considered as the most fundamental. The U.N. Convention on the political rights of women adopted by the General Assembly in 1952 provides that "women shall be entitled to vote in all elections on equal terms with men, without any discrimination".

The United Nations declared 1975 as the 'International Women's Year', and 1980 as the 'Year for Development of Women'. During this period, the nations of the world were expected to focus their attention and resources on the problems of women with the objective of integrating women in social, economic and political activities. The United Nations 'Women's Development Decade'(1976-85) might have not achieved wonders, but certainly created consciousness all over the world regarding the need for raising status of women in society and thereby, enhancing their role in the process of development.

The World Conference of human rights urges;

(1) The full and equal enjoyment of women of all human rights, and that be a priority for governments and the United Nations.

(2) The equal status of women and elimination of discrimination.

(3) Elimination of all forms of sexual harassment, exploitation and trafficking of women and elimination of gender bias.

(4) Disseminating necessary information to enable women to make more effective use of existing implementation procedures.

(5) Enjoyment by women of all the highest standard of physical and mental health throughout their life span and the right to accessible and adequate health care.

(6) Equal access to education at all levels.

(7) Access of women to decision-making posts.

In spite of perceptible improvement in general socio-economic condition of women, the situation continues to be grim. Available statistics reveals the continued neglect of female children's health and nutrition needs, their early marriage, high fertility, poverty and inadequate access to health care. Thus the most significant achievement has been to raise women's issues to the level of public discourse.

Position of Women in India: A Historical Analysis - India is known for her specific culture. There is no direct reference to the notion of rights in India. However, it lies embedded in its culture. The notion of Purusharthas: Dharma (rules and regulations), Artha (material prosperity), Kama (sexual pleasure) and Moksha (eternal bliss) reflects four values of life for human development. It seeks to achieve both empirical and spiritual development of individuals. The Vedic sages also emphasize on the development and happiness of entire humanity: "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhina" or "Let all be happy".

However, one can not overlook the plethora of social evils like intolerant casteism, Sati (burning widow while living), female infanticide, child marriage, religious orthodoxy, communalism etc. which viciated the society and blatantly violated human rights.

However, it is necessary to understand the socio-political movements in India because these movements have had a great impact on the women's life in India. At the dawn of Indian history, the Vedic women possessed high status, an equal partner with men. This soon became legendary and the women were sinking deeper in economic dependence, religious taboos and social subservience and were treated as second class mortals.

A steady deterioration of the status of women further reached a new low after the disruption of the Mughal Empire and the consequent political and social confusion in the 18th century. So, when the British Period started, the position of the women was, in a sense worst, in the history of India. Child marriage was almost universal among the high caste Hindus, and had ever spread to some sections of the Muslims. The practice of 'Sati' was existing and literacy among women was regarded as a source of moral danger.

With the above existing situation one of the remarkable features of modern India has been the unprecedented awakening of Indian women during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The active role and sincere efforts of many eminent social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Mahadeo Govind Ranade and so on contributed a lot in this regard.

Thus, the social reformers of the 19th and early 20th centuries prepared a fertile ground on which Gandhiji could sow the seeds of inspiration for women's participation in the Freedom Struggle. However, with the attainment of Indian Independence on August 15, 1947 and the framing of its Constitution, many of the demands of the women's movement were incorporated.

Constitutional Provisions for the Upliftment of Women in India - The Constitution of India has ensured equal status to all, i.e. not only between men and men, women and women but also between men and women. But the basic question is that how far we have been able to achieve the objectives provided by the Constitution. In view of this, an attempt has been made to acquaint the Indian women with the constitutional provisions relating to them, so that they can fight

for the rightful cause or justice. Under the Constitution, the Preamble speaks of securing to all citizens equality of status and of opportunity as well as justice - social, economic and political. Further, the Directive Principles of State Policy under the same document ordains that the State should not make any discrimination on the ground of sex and that it should direct its policy towards securing justice equally to both men and women. However, the special provisions given to women became highlighted only in 73rd and 74th Amendment Act, 1992 when the Constitution provided 33% reservation of seats to women at local-self and urban-self bodies to make them equal with their men counterparts in the political field. Again 106th Constitutional Amendment Act, popularly known as the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023 allocating 33% of seats to women in Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and the National Capital Territory of Delhi is really a historical step in empowering women politically as well as in other spheres of their life.

The Constitution of India under Article 14 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of law to all men and women within the territory of India.

Article 15 (1) prohibits the state from making any kind of discrimination "against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth or any of them".

Article 15 (2) provides that no citizen shall, on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to any access to shop, restaurants, hotels and places of entertainment.

Article 15 (3) empowers the state to make "any special provision for women and children".

Article 16 (1) guarantees "equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state".

Article 16(2) forbids discrimination "in respect of any employment of office under the state" on the grounds only of "religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any one of them".

The Directive Principles of State Policy enunciated in Part-IV of the Constitution, embody the major policy goals of the welfare state. Some Articles there deal with women indirectly while a few others concern women directly and have a special bearing on their status.

The Articles that concern women indirectly include : Article 38 directs the state to secure a just social, political and economic order geared to promote the welfare of the people; Article 39 (b), (c) and (d) relate to the distribution of ownership and control of material resources of the community for the common good and protection of children and youth against exploitation; Article 40 concerns the organization of village panchayats to promote self government; Article 41 appertains the right to work, education and public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness, disablement and other types of undeserved wants; Article 43 contains provision of work, a living wage, condition of work ensuring a decent standard of life and cultural opportunities and the promotion of cottage industries; Article 45 ensures free and compulsory education for all children up to the age 14; and Article 47 relates to raising the level of nutrition and the standard of living of the people and improvement of public health.

The Articles of Directive Principles which deal with women directly and have a special bearing on their status include : Article 39(a), right to an adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally; Article 39(d) equal pay for equal work both for men and women; Article 39(4), protection of the health and strength of workers - men, women and children from abuse and entry into avocations unsuited to their age and strength, and Article 42 states for just and human conditions of work and maternity relief.

Article 51A (e) of the constitution of India imposes fundamental duty upon every citizen of India to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Finally, Article 325 and 326 introduce Universal Adult Franchise without any distinction of sex.

The special attention given to the needs and problems of women, to enable them to enjoy and exercise their constitutional equality of status.

Formation of National Commission for Women - The National Commission for Women was set up as a statutory body in January 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990 to review the constitutional and legal safeguards for the women. It consists of a Chairperson, five members and a member Secretary being nominated by the Central Government. The Commission investigates and examines all the matters relating to the safeguards provided for the women under the Constitution and other laws and recommends for

the effective implementation of those safeguards for improving the conditions of the women by the Union or any state. It also reviews, from time to time, the existing provisions of the Constitution and other laws affecting the women and recommends amendments there of so as to suggest remedial legislative measures to meet any lacunae, inadequacies or shortcomings in such legislations.

Concluding Observations - In spite of perceptible improvement in general socio-economic condition of women, due to efforts made after independence, the situation continues to be grim. Available statistics reveals the continued neglect of female children's health and nutrition needs, their early marriage, high fertility, poverty and inadequate access to health care. In the field of education the massive dimension of the problem of female illiteracy daunts the society which limits the achievements of women in the field of employment, training, and utilization of health facilities & exercise of their legal rights. Besides the Constitutional provisions and special enactments, in the country like India, women are still subjected to all kinds of discrimination and humiliation. It is now the right time to give proper consideration to these issues and laws relating to them so as to implement these provisions for the proper upliftment of women in the country. We should not only change our approaches and strategies but also should change our perception and treatment towards women so as to make them feel more free and convenient in the society.

Thus, one may conclude by saying that women in India have to go long way to attain the complete gender justice in social, political, economic, educational and cultural field. The need of the hour is: not welfare, but development; not charity, but entitlement; not assistance, but empowerment; not structural adjustment, but structural change; not even social security but social & gender justice, if the women are to survive, flourish and improve in the given situation.

References:

1. Bakshi, Rajni. (1985). The Women's Movement in India: A Historical Perspective. Lokayan Publications.
2. Peters, Julie and Andrea. (1995). *Women's Rights Human Rights*. Routledge.
3. Soni, Suresh Kr. (Ed. 2007). *Human Rights - Concept, Issues and Emerging Problems*. Regal Publications.
4. Boles, Janet K. (1991). *"American Feminism - New Issues for a Mature Movement,"* Annals, V (515), 163.

5. Shattack, John. (1993). *Violations of Women's Human Rights,* US Dept of State Despatch, 4 (41).
6. LWF Studies, Geneva. (1984). *Women's Human Rights*. p.19.
7. Guha, Sampa. (1996). *Political Participation of Women in a Changing Society*. Inter-India Publications.
8. Ahuja, Ram. (1992). *Rights of Women*. Hind Pocket Books.
9. Dibakar, V.D. (1991). *Social Reform Movements in India: A Historical Perspective*. Popular Prakashan.
10. Vidya, K.C. (1977). *Political Empowerment of Women at the Grassroots*. Kanishka Publishers.
11. Antony, M.J. (1995).*Women's Rights*. Hind Pocket Books.
12. Paul, Wilkinson. (1971). *Social Movement*. Macmillan.
13. Clayton, Richard. (ed. 2000). *The Law of Human Rights*. Oxford University Press.
14. Boxi, Upendra. (1974). *Constitutional Provisions Relating to Status of Women: An Analytical Examination*, Paper prepared for the Committee on the Status of Women in India. 15.
Sindhu, Sanjay. (2007). *Constitutional Protection of Women in India - Introspection and Prospective Vision* in Suresh Kumar Soni's edition Human Rights-Concept, Issues and Emerging Problems. Regal Publications.
16. Mathews, Jojo & Gautam, Manish K. (2006). *Indian Polity and Constitution*. ALS Publications.
17. https: / / indianexpress.com accessed electronically on 09 / 12 / 2024.
18. https: / / www.loc.gov. *India: Parliament Enacts Women's Reservation Bill* accessed electronically on 10 / 12 / 2024.

14

A Theoretical Study on Status of Women in Indian Society & Challenges

Pradip Karmakar

Abstract

In the stage of 75 years 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' the Indian society remains a male-dominated society. The old values are still carefully nurtured in Indian society and also bear it our family system in a mind set up of the Patriarchical Society. Women's place in the hierarchical structure of the family is below the male members. Women have no role in family decision making. A wife's status is still determined by the status of her husband and family, not by her personal merits or qualities. Women also face gender discrimination and also lag behind men in terms of social, economic & political participation. As much as Indian women are interested in expressing independent opinions on various aspects of their daily lives, women are not as interested in political decision-making. Actually the socialization process of Indian society is responsible for this. Indian women are inculcated from childhood with the idea that a woman's proper place is the home, outside the home is not a woman's business, it is a man's business. In our Indian society the position and status of women is belong in the name of torture, raped, sexual assault, harrasment & finally they are murdered by a planning conspiracy from the big type of raked or agent. So in the era of Globalization the mass media are to much active, but the ultimate result of the proper judgement is finalised by money & the big hand of political biousness. Even school and college going girls, philosophers, educationist cannot overcome this complex type of framework.

Keywords*: Society, System, Status, Values, Patriarchy.*

A Preamble:

In the patriarchal society based on the Indian joint family, women were deprived of property and inheritance rights. The British rulers

also did not interfere much with the prevailing social norms in the country. In matters of marriage, family system, property rights, etc., the rules of the religious community were generally maintained. Needless to say, there was no exception to this rule for Muslim women. Even the nationalist leadership of India during the British period did not care at all about the unequal social position of Indian women. They took the help of heroic women to save the country, but they could not come out of the belief that the proper place for women was the home. After the independence of India, the modern state structure was formed. The constitution was framed on the basis of the great ideals of democracy, equality, secularism, socialism etc. But the traditional Indian social structure based on religion and inequality remained unchanged. As a result, the difference between ideal and reality remained, and this difference became most pronounced in the field of male-female relations.

Objectives of the Study :

The main objectives of the Study are ;

1) What Positions women's of India belongs.. ?
2) What was their role in every levels of our Indian Society...?
3) How to step or action in the case of against Women's Violation & Protection...?
4) To include, the Present Scenario & Importance of Women in everywhere in Society and the field of 21st Century.

Methodology:

The above study are mainly focused on Purely theoretical framework and followed some emperical methodology. Data collected from secondary sources like books, journal, article, E- newspaper, internet & website etc.

Status of women in Ancient Period:

In the different fields of Research shows that in ancient Indian society there was no distinction between household work and livelihood work. All work had to be done by all people. But girls were mainly engaged in farming, while men were busy with hunting. Men and women had equal rights in all matters. When the Aryas entered the society and culture of India and gradually the society. A cultural shift began to take place. The social system based on equal rights of men and women was torn apart. The Aryans used to show

respect to the women of this country. They thought of non-Aryan women as Shudras. The social system based on the equality of men and women began to collapse. Women had a special place in society during the ancient Vedic period. In the Atharvaveda, women are on the one hand practicing domestic dharma, and on the other, accompanying men in Yagayas and various religious ceremonies. Joining the equation. Brahma was believed to be one in this era. His two forms are male and female. When the same soul joins the body it takes that form. Even in the era of Ramayana and Mahabharata, women are seen participating in Yagya along with men. Both Gandhari and Kusti were religious, initiated in Vedic mantras, intelligent. Draupadi's knowledge in religion and ethics is well known. Swayambar meetings were the custom during the Mahabharata. Savitri, Damayanti, Kunti, Draupadi all married husbands of their choice. In martial arts, women excel in teaching. However, towards the end of the Vedic period, women's freedom gradually declined. Some sages started imposing various restrictions on the society, especially on women. 'Manusanghita' written in the context of the social conditions of the time played a significant role in curtailing women's freedom. Women's right to education, right to pilgrimage are curtailed and women's character is attacked in various ways. The practice of self-marriage has been abolished. Child marriage was introduced to prevent the spread of women's education and freedom of thought. Forced to follow the strict discipline of widowhood. In some cases, co-death is also heard. At the end of the Vedic period, daughters were deprived of their father's property.

In Mediaeval Period:

The early medieval period the social position of women faces adversity. But under the influence of Buddhism and Jainism in education and practice Women's rights were upheld.During the Sultanate period, women in India had to live in a deplorable condition. As weak Hindu kings were unable to protect women, 'jahar vrata' i.e. immolation of wives in fire after the death of their husbands. The practice of giving is introduced. The use of veils by Hindus and veils and burkhas by Muslims has almost become legal. Hindus in wealthy families had multiple marriages and kings kept hundreds of wives or concubines. The four marriages of Muslims were religiously valid. In the Hindu temples of South India, the practice of keeping beautiful girls as devadasi was introduced. As a result, women's education in the society is far away, until they go out on the streets, they are closed.

In British Period:

After the British came to India, the situation improved somewhat. The British were active in introducing women's education, promoting widow marriage, preventing child marriage and sati-immolation. However, the active support of Indian thinkers such as Rammohan Roy, Vidyasagar etc. and they got support. But the British rulers never showed enthusiasm for fundamental changes in the Indian social structure. Rather, they were in favor of maintaining the status quo. So they maintain the prevailing Hindu Law, Muslim Law etc. in matters of Marriage, Divorce, Family, Inheritance System etc. Naturally, the women of both the Hindu and Muslim communities in India continue to be crushed by the prevailing patriarchal laws. India's nationalist leaders also wanted to keep women as ideal mothers, housewives and wives.

Reality of Women after Independence and Constitution:

The reality of independent India remained distorted and this distortion was most evident in the gender discrimination of the state structure and constitution. Citizens are fundamental in the constitution of independent India Rights are guaranteed. Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution speak of equality before the law and prohibit discrimination based on sex. Article 16 mentions equality in employment for all regardless of gender. The Guiding Principles on State Administration announced the introduction of a uniform civil code throughout the country and equal pay for men and women for equal work. But nowhere in the Constitution does it say that the social injustices suffered by Indian women under the existing system will be ended. Nowhere is it said that the traditional patriarchal gender based social structure will be changed. In the field of family, marriage, divorce, etc., the prevailing customs and regulations among the various religious communities have been upheld as before. Some leaders like Nehru, Ambedkar, however wanted to amend the existing Hindu law to eliminate gender discrimination in property and marriage. A proposal was also brought in this regard. But the proposal was rejected due to the opposition of orthodox Hindu representatives. This means that except for a few individuals, most of the political leaders of India at that time wanted to keep the traditional patriarchal social structure intact.

Challenges & Violence against women in India:

Professor Ram Ahuja in his book titled 'Social Problems in India' mentioned 5 causes of violence against women in India, namely- (1)

provocation by victims, (2) intoxication, (3) hostility towards women women), (4) situational urge, and (5) personality traits.

(1) Instigation by the victim :

Sometimes the female victim unconsciously or unconsciously acts in such a way that she herself becomes a victim. That is, he by his conduct arouses in the mind of the oppressor violence or desire to oppress. Talking to criminals who have beaten their own wives, it has been found that most of the criminals are not at all remorseful for what they have done. Their complaint against wives is that they misbehave with family members, do not perform family responsibilities properly, talk to other men or engage in illicit relations, quarrel with everyone, etc.

(2) Intoxication:

A significant cause of violence against women is excessive drinking. Intoxication causes people to become unconscious under wild excitement and do things which they would never have done under normal circumstances. According to a study conducted by Ram Ahuja, In at least 31.7% of the cases where the wife was beaten and murdered, the accused were under the influence of alcohol Ahuja refuses to accept alcoholism as the only reason for violence against women.

(3) Hostility towards women:

There are some people who are misogynists by nature. They are very normal when dealing with men, but become abnormal when dealing with women. They do not hesitate to torture women. Hatred and hatred of women is what prompts them to act like this.

(4) Situational urge :

Many incidents of violence against women happen on the spur of the moment. Such incidents happen suddenly without any pre-planning. Sometimes it is seen that due to a small amount of money or because of the words of the parents, the husband gets excited. He beat his wife. This is how rape sometimes happens suddenly.

5) Personality traits:

Research has shown that people who

Women abusers have certain personal or character traits that lead them to engage in criminal activities, such as suspiciousness,

emotionality, domineering attitude, jealousy, eccentricity, etc. Lack of proper socialization is one of the reasons that lead to such antisocial behavior. If a child or teenager sees his father often coming home drunk and shouting and breaking things, then the character development of that child or teenager will never happen properly.

Remedial Measures:

Now the question is how to stop violence against women..? Many experience shows that it is not possible to solve this problem only by making laws. This requires radical social change. Ms. Vaswati Basu in her essay titled 'International Women's Movement in Historical Context' commented, "Women's freedom will come through radical changes in society, through the establishment of socialism, through the path of sound scientific thought." He further said, "Today no women can progress through bourgeois reformism. The emancipation of this exploited women's society will come only through the abolition of the class-divided society."It must be remembered that radical social change does not come by chance or suddenly, it requires special social conditions. Some of the general proposals for curbing violence and crime against women are (a) raising the consciousness and social status of women through proper education; (b) enacting implementing legislation; (c) providing employment to women; (d) highlighting the issue of violence against women through the media; (e) Traditional patriarchal society must be changed.

Political measures in the prevention of violence against women in India :

India's legal commitment against violence against women is second to none, at least on the books. Legislation has been enacted to prevent prostitution, to prevent rape, to prevent bride abuse, to ban sati-burning, to stop molestation, etc. In the 1980s, almost all of the laws related to criminal offenses against women in the Indian Penal Code were amended. and some new laws were added to keep pace with the times. Notable among these are Bride Torture and Cruelty Act and Amendment (1983, 1986), Rape Act Amendment (1986), Usury Prevention Act Amendment (1984-1986), Harassment Act (1986, 1987), Sati Prohibition Act (1987). , etc. 7/1988 Fetal sex determination test by Govt of Maharashtra in 1988 and Govt of Rajasthan in 1988 Prohibition Act passed. And in 1996 this fetal sex test was banned across India.

Our Beliefs:

So, in reviewing the social position of Indian women the picture we get is that there has not been much fundamental change in the social position of Indian women at the turn of the twenty-first century. The number of educated women in India is still very low, the number of financially independent women is also less, the number of conscious women who are not burdened by the burden of femininity is a handful, but the number of women who are abused, assaulted, tortured, raped, beaten is countless. But more recently the stagnation of the social position of Indian women has begun to budge. Although there is no fundamental change, there is a faint light of change in the mentality of Indian women. There is some consciousness among them about gender discrimination appears Feminist movement which started in western countries a few days ago, has recently started its wave in India. Various feminist organizations have been formed and are emerging. In education, sports, science, politics, Indian women are seen to come forward. It is seen that various measures have been adopted at the government and private levels to eliminate the discrimination between men and women. But until Indian women become educated and financially independent, equality between men and women will remain elusive. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen said, elimination of gender-based discrimination is not possible without the achievement of women's self-reliance in the field of education and economics.

Finally, one may recall the famous words of rebel poet Nazrul, "All the great creations in the world are eternally good; half of them are created by women, half by men. Male-dominated societies may forget this, but it is up to women to remind them. Rights are not earned by begging." , rights must be earned. They will explain that the recognition of women's equality is not a gift from anyone, it is a rightful debt of women.

References:

1. Sarkar. Kalyan Kumar, (2025), Naribad, Lingya Rajniti & Narir Khamotayn; Evenel Publication, Kolkata.
2. Sarkar. Kalyan Kumar,(2015), Political Sociology; Navodaya Publication, Kolkata.

3. Ahuja. Ram, (2021), Social Problems in India, Rawat Publication.
4. Kumari. Puja & Singh. R (2023), Satyam law Publication.
5. Sharma. Rajendra,(2023), Indian society: Institution and Change, Atlantic publishers.
6. Ahuja. Ram, (2024), Society in India: Concepts, Theories and Recent Trends,Visionias Publication.
7. Sarkar. Kalyan Kumar, (2018), Rastrabigyaner Bhumika; Sree Bhumi Publication, Kolkata.
8. Chakraborty. Sumita, (2007), Rastra Bigyan Porichoi ; Readers Home Publication, Kolkata.
9. Chakraborty. Satyabrata, (2002), Rastra Samaj Rajniti ; Ekushe Publication, Kolkata.
10. Mukhopadhyay. Pralaydeb, (2007), Rastra & Rajniti : Tattwa o Motbadik Bitorko; Bijoya Publishing House, Kolkata.
11. Dalal. Pranab Kumar, (2005), Sociology and Politics ;Book Syndicate Private Limited Publication, Kolkata.

Website Citation:-

https: / / en.m.wikipedia.org / wiki / Women_in_India

https: / / en.m.wikipedia.org / wiki / Feminism_in_India

https: / / en.m.wikipedia.org / wiki / Gender_inequality_in_India

https: / / en.m.wikipedia.org / wiki / Women%27s_empowerment

15

Global Perspectives on Women's Safety and Security: Challenges and Pathways to Empowerment

Puja Dhar

Abstract

The safety and security of women remain critical issues globally, affected by complex socio-economic, cultural, and political factors that vary widely across regions. Despite progress in some areas, women worldwide continue to face significant threats, including gender-based violence, limited access to justice, discrimination, and systemic inequality, all of which undermine their safety and restrict their empowerment. This paper explores the multidimensional challenges women face in achieving safety and security, drawing insights from diverse geographical and cultural contexts to highlight commonalities and differences. It examines the impact of policies, social attitudes, and economic conditions on women's rights and identifies barriers that limit their access to protective services, legal recourse, and economic independence. Through a comparative analysis, the paper identifies effective strategies and frameworks being implemented at local, national, and international levels to address these challenges, from community-based initiatives to institutional reforms. The discussion further emphasizes pathways to empowerment, including education, economic opportunities, and enhanced representation in decision-making roles, all of which contribute to a safer environment for women. By synthesizing global perspectives, this study underscores the urgent need for a collaborative, rights-based approach to fostering women's safety and empowerment, with actionable recommendations for policymakers, advocates, and communities worldwide.

Keywords: *Violence, Representation, Empowerment, Justice, Multidimensional*

Introduction: The empowerment and autonomy of women, alongside improvements in their political, social, economic, and health status, are crucial objectives that stand as important ends in themselves. Moreover, these goals are fundamental for achieving sustainable development on a global scale. Ensuring full participation and partnership of both women and men in all aspects of productive and reproductive life is essential, encompassing shared responsibilities in child-rearing, caregiving, and household maintenance. Despite ongoing efforts, women worldwide face numerous threats to their lives, health, and well-being due to heavy workloads and a lack of power and influence in both personal and public spheres. In many regions, women have access to less formal education compared to men, and their knowledge, skills, and coping strategies often go unrecognized. Power dynamics that restrict women's ability to lead fulfilling, healthy lives operate at multiple societal levels, from intimate relationships to broader public systems. To drive meaningful change, targeted policies and programs are needed to enhance women's access to stable livelihoods and economic resources, alleviate the overwhelming burden of household responsibilities, remove legal barriers that hinder their public engagement, and elevate social awareness through education and mass communication initiatives. Additionally, enhancing women's status strengthens their capacity to make decisions across all areas of life, particularly in matters related to sexuality and reproduction. This empowerment is critical for the long-term success of population and development programs. Evidence shows that such programs are most effective when they simultaneously address improvements in women's status.

OBJECTIVE :

I. To explore the key factors influencing women's safety and security in different global contexts, including social, economic, and legal dimensions.

II. To identify common challenges women face in accessing safety and justice, particularly in regions with high rates of gender-based violence.

III. To evaluate successful policies, community programs, and institutional frameworks that have positively impacted women's safety and empowerment.

IV. To provide recommendations for policymakers, NGOs, and communities to foster a safer environment and promote gender equality.

- **Historical Background**: Women's safety and security issues have evolved alongside societal structures, with deep historical roots influenced by gender roles, cultural beliefs, economic systems, and legal frameworks. Understanding this historical context is essential to comprehending the ongoing challenges women face and the pathways to empowerment that have emerged over time. Below is an overview of the historical background of women's safety and security, focusing on major cultural, economic, legal, and social milestones.
- **Ancient Societies and Early Patriarchal Systems:**In many ancient civilizations, women's roles were defined primarily within the family, with security often contingent upon male family members. Patriarchal norms were entrenched in societies, such as Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt, and early Greece, where women's rights and safety depended largely on social class and family hierarchy. In many societies, women had few legal rights, limited freedom of movement, and were often subject to violence or coercion. The Code of Hammurabi (c. 1754 BCE), one of the earliest legal codes from Mesopotamia, for instance, included provisions regulating women's behaviour and marital obligations, demonstrating early codifications of gendered power dynamics that restricted women's autonomy.
- **Women's Roles in Feudal and Medieval Societies:**During the medieval and feudal periods (5th–15th centuries), women's lives were largely controlled by familial or feudal allegiances. Women's safety was closely tied to their husbands' or fathers' status, as family honour was often prioritized over women's personal security. Marital violence and coercion were common, as women had few legal rights to resist or escape such abuse. However, women occasionally found empowerment through religious institutions, such as becoming nuns, which offered them relative independence compared to married life.The role of women began to shift slowly with the development of chivalric codes that, while paternalistic, idealized protection for women, influencing cultural ideas of "protecting" women,

though this protection was often conditional and did not grant true autonomy or security.

- **Enlightenment and Early Calls for Women's Rights:**The Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries brought ideas of equality, individual rights, and personal freedom that challenged traditional views on gender. Thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft argued for women's education and autonomy in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), marking an early feminist call for women's rights. This period inspired social movements that questioned women's lack of legal rights and advocated for women's participation in public life.Despite these ideas, legal and societal practices continued to limit women's rights. Domestic violence was rarely acknowledged as a legal issue, and women had little recourse against abusive relationships. Nonetheless, Enlightenment ideals provided the foundation for later women's rights movements that would eventually address safety, autonomy, and security.
- **Contemporary Developments in Women's Safety and Empowerment:**In recent decades, there has been growing recognition of the complex forms of violence women face, from trafficking and femicide to digital harassment. The #MeToo movement, initiated in 2017, brought global attention to issues of sexual harassment and assault, highlighting the need for systemic change to protect women's security in both public and private spheres. International agreements, such as the Istanbul Convention (2011), have emerged to combat violence against women through legislative action, victim support, and community education.Today, technology is being leveraged to address women's safety, from mobile apps for reporting violence to digital platforms that raise awareness of rights. However, despite progress, challenges persist globally, especially in regions where legal and cultural barriers continue to inhibit women's safety and equality.**Key factors influencing women's safety and security in various contexts span social, economic, and legal dimensions. These factors often intersect, affecting women differently based on their environment, cultural norms, and access to resources.Social FactorsCultural Norms and Gender Roles**: Societies with rigid gender norms may limit women's mobility, freedom of expression, and access to public spaces, increasing their vulnerability to harassment

and violence. Traditional expectations often discourage women from seeking help, which can perpetuate abuse.**Family and Community Dynamics:** In many cultures, family reputation or honour is tied to women's behaviour, leading to restrictions on their activities and decisions, including reporting abuse or harassment.**Education and Awarenes**s: Low levels of education limit women's awareness of their rights and available resources, making it challenging for them to seek help or know about protective laws.**Social Stigma and Victim Blaming**: Women may be discouraged from reporting violence or harassment due to societal stigma or fear of being blamed, which can prevent them from accessing support services or justice.

- **Economic FactorsFinancial Dependence**: Women who rely financially on partners or family members may be reluctant to report violence or leave abusive situations, fearing financial insecurity.**Employment and Income Inequality**: In many places, women earn less than men and have fewer job opportunities, which reduces their ability to achieve economic independence. Limited income restricts their access to secure housing, healthcare, and legal services.**Access to Property and Resources**: Property ownership laws or practices that limit women's access to land, housing, or credit can make them more vulnerable, as they may lack the resources needed to leave unsafe environments.**Workplace Discrimination and Harassment**: Women often face harassment and discrimination in the workplace, limiting their economic security and ability to advance, which affects their overall sense of safe.
- **Legal FactorsLegal Protections and Enforcement:** Inconsistent or weak enforcement of laws related to domestic violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence leaves women vulnerable. Even where laws exist, inadequate implementation or corruption can hinder justice.**Access to Justice**: Women often encounter barriers when seeking legal recourse, including high legal fees, lengthy court processes, and biases within legal systems, all of which discourage reporting and hinder justice.**Reproductive and Sexual Rights**: Limited legal rights around reproductive health and autonomy can increase women's vulnerability to violence and abuse, as control over their bodies and decisions can be restricted.**Political**

Representation and Advocacy: Low representation of women in government can result in policies that inadequately address women's needs, particularly regarding safety and gender-based violence.

- **Intersectional FactorsAge, Ethnicity, and Socioeconomic Background**: Women from marginalized communities or low-income backgrounds often face compounded risks due to additional discrimination and fewer resources.**Urban vs. Rural Contexts**: Women in rural areas may face greater barriers to safety and security, including limited access to support services, legal protection, and economic opportunities compared to urban areas.
- **Evaluating successful policies, community programs, and institutional frameworks that have positively impacted women's safety and empowerment reveals a variety of strategies that can be adapted and scaled across diverse contexts. Here's an overview:**
- **1. Successful Policies**
- **a. Legislative Reforms**
- **Iceland's Gender Equality Act (2008):**

Mandates equal pay for equal work and created the Equal Pay Certification system to ensure compliance. This has significantly reduced gender pay gaps and empowered women economically.

- **India's Criminal Law Amendment Act (2013):**

Strengthened laws against sexual violence, harassment, and acid attacks following public protests. This includes stricter punishments and measures for improving reporting mechanisms.

- **Sweden's Coercive Control Legislation (2021):**

  Criminalizes psychological abuse in domestic relationships, setting a benchmark for addressing non-physical forms of violence.

- **b. National Action Plans**
- **Australia's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children (2010–2022):**

This comprehensive strategy integrates legal, social, and community-based interventions to combat domestic and family violence.

❖ **Canada's Gender-Based Violence Strategy (2017):**

Focuses on prevention, support for survivors, and justice system improvements, utilizing data-driven approaches and cultural sensitivity.

❖ **2. Effective Community Programs**

❖ **a. Local Initiatives**

❖ **The Safe Cities Initiative (UN Women):**

Active in cities like Cairo, Delhi, and Kigali, this program focuses on urban design improvements, public transport safety, and community awareness campaigns to reduce violence in public spaces.

❖ **SASA! (Uganda):**

A community mobilization program by Raising Voices that addresses gender-based violence and HIV. It focuses on transforming power dynamics through engagement with both men and women, with measurable reductions in intimate partner violence.

❖ **SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association, India):**

Empowers women in informal sectors by providing training, microfinance, and advocacy support. SEWA has helped women achieve greater financial independence and reduced vulnerabilities.

❖ **BRAC (Bangladesh):**

Through its gender justice program, BRAC offers vocational training, microloans, and awareness campaigns, significantly improving women's economic and social standing.

❖ **c. Digital Safety Initiatives**

❖ **The Safer Internet for Women Project (European Union):**

Provides tools, training, and resources for women to address online harassment and cyberbullying, empowering them to navigate digital spaces safely.

❖ **3. Institutional Frameworks**

❖ **a. Dedicated Gender Equality Bodies**

❖ **Spain's Ministry of Equality:**

Coordinates policies across government sectors, focusing on violence prevention, gender parity, and LGBTQ+ rights. Its integrated approach has led to legislative advancements and increased public awareness.

❖ **Rwanda's Gender Monitoring Office (GMO):**

Oversees the country's gender mainstreaming efforts, ensuring that policies and programs align with gender equity goals. Rwanda's post-genocide recovery has made it a global leader in women's political representation.

❖ **Partnership for Peace (Caribbean):**

A collaboration between governments, NGOs, and communities to prevent violence through education and advocacy programs targeting men and boys.

❖ **U.S. Violence Against Women Act (VAWA):**

Provides funding for local organizations, shelters, and law enforcement training to combat domestic violence and sexual assault.

❖ **One-Stop Crisis Centers (Malaysia, India, South Africa):**

Integrated facilities offering medical care, legal assistance, and psychological support to survivors of gender-based violence.

❖ **Kenya's Gender Desks in Police Stations:**

Specialized units trained to handle cases of violence against women with sensitivity, increasing reporting rates and survivor confidence.

❖ **4. Empowerment Through Education and Advocacy**

a. Gender-Sensitive Education

Girls' Education Challenge (UK Aid):

A program to enhance educational access for girls in low-income countries, directly addressing early marriage and other safety risks through education.

❖ **Safe School Programs (Africa and South Asia):**

Introduce anti-harassment policies, awareness campaigns, and secure infrastructure to protect girls in schools.

❖ **#MeToo Movement (Global):**

Raised awareness of workplace harassment and empowered survivors to speak out, leading to policy changes in many organizations.

- **HeForShe Campaign (UN Women):**

  Engages men and boys as allies in promoting gender equality and challenging societal norms.

5. Indicators of Success

Successful programs and policies share common features:

- **Holistic Approach:** Address interconnected issues like education, economic empowerment, and legal protection.
- **Community Involvement:** Engage grassroots organizations and local leaders to ensure cultural relevance and sustainability.
- **Scalability and Flexibility:** Adapt to diverse contexts and expand over time.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Use data to measure impact and refine strategies.

By learning from these successful examples, governments, organizations, and communities can design effective interventions to promote women's safety and empowerment.

- **Some initiative of policy makers and NGO for promote gender equality** :Here are actionable recommendations for policymakers, NGOs, and communities to foster a safer environment and promote gender equality, organized by stakeholder group:

- **1. Recommendations for Policymakers**

a. Strengthen Legal Frameworks

- **Criminalize all forms of gender-based violence (GBV):** Enact comprehensive laws addressing domestic violence, sexual harassment, trafficking, and psychological abuse.
- **Enforce laws effectively:** Establish specialized courts or units to handle GBV cases swiftly and fairly, ensuring accountability.
- **Adopt international frameworks:** Ratify and implement treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Istanbul Convention.

b. Promote Gender-Responsive Budgeting

- Allocate resources for shelters, legal aid, healthcare services, and vocational training for survivors of violence. Fund gender-

sensitive urban planning initiatives, such as better lighting, CCTV surveillance, and safe public transportation systems.

❖ **c. Enhance Women's Economic Empowerment**

Equal pay and opportunities: Legislate pay equity and create incentives for businesses to promote women to leadership positions.

Access to credit: Establish microfinance programs and women-centric banking systems to encourage entrepreneurship.

Childcare support: Introduce subsidized childcare services to ease the dual burden of work and family responsibilities.

❖ **d. Implement Gender-Sensitive Education Policies**

❖ Revise school curricula to promote gender equality, address harmful stereotypes, and educate students on consent and respect.

❖ Introduce mandatory sexual harassment and GBV prevention training for educators and students.

2. Recommendations for NGOs

a. Provide Grassroots Support

❖ **Establish community-based support centers:** Offer shelters, psychological counselling, and legal aid for survivors of violence.

Create empowerment programs: Organize vocational training, financial literacy workshops, and mentorship programs to build women's confidence and independence.

b. Advocate for Change

Collaborate with governments to draft gender-sensitive policies and monitor their implementation.

Conduct awareness campaigns on social media and in local communities to challenge harmful cultural norms and taboos.

c. Train Law Enforcement and Judiciary

Provide sensitivity training to police, judges, and social workers to improve their handling of gender-based violence cases.

Encourage the establishment of gender desks at police stations to create a supportive reporting environment for survivors.

d. Facilitate Community Dialogues

Engage men and boys in conversations about gender roles, respect, and allyship through programs like UN Women's *HeForShe.*

Mobilize faith leaders, elders, and influencers to endorse gender equality and discourage harmful practices such as child marriage.

3. Recommendations for Communities

a. Build Safe Spaces

Collaborate with local governments to enhance infrastructure such as street lighting, security systems, and well-designed public spaces. Establish community watch groups to monitor and respond to safety concerns, particularly in rural or isolated areas.

b. Challenge Cultural Norms

Foster intergenerational dialogues to address traditions and beliefs that perpetuate gender inequality. Celebrate positive role models by highlighting women leaders, entrepreneurs, and change-makers.

c. Promote Education and Awareness

Host workshops, plays, and discussions to educate both genders about rights, consent, and respect. Use storytelling and media campaigns to dismantle stereotypes and encourage new gender norms.

d. Empower Women Through Local Networks

Form women's self-help groups to address common challenges, share resources, and create community support systems. Train women as first responders in their communities for emergencies related to violence or disasters.

4. Cross-Sector Collaborations

a. Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

Encourage governments, NGOs, and private sectors to collaborate on initiatives like workplace safety policies and community development projects. Partner with international organizations to share best practices and secure funding for local gender equality initiatives.

b. Technology Integration

Develop apps for reporting harassment or violence that connect users to law enforcement and support services.

Promote online campaigns to educate and engage communities on gender equality issues.

c. Data Collection and Research

Conduct regular surveys to assess safety levels, identify challenges, and monitor progress.

Publish gender-disaggregated data to guide evidence-based policymaking and programming.

Conclusion

Women's safety and security remain pressing global challenges shaped by diverse cultural, social, economic, and legal contexts. Despite significant progress in some regions, systemic barriers continue to undermine women's rights and expose them to risks of violence, discrimination, and exploitation. Factors such as entrenched patriarchal norms, economic inequality, and inadequate legal protections perpetuate vulnerabilities. At the same time, globalization, digitalization, and advocacy movements have created new opportunities to amplify women's voices and drive change. Addressing these issues requires a **multi-dimensional approach** that combines robust policy frameworks, grassroots initiatives, and societal transformation. Policymakers must prioritize gender-sensitive legislation and resource allocation, while NGOs and communities play a critical role in fostering awareness, building support networks, and challenging harmful norms. Additionally, empowering women through education, economic independence, and leadership opportunities is essential to achieving long-term safety and security. Pathways to empowerment must also emphasize collaboration between stakeholders—governments, international organizations, private sectors, and communities—to create inclusive, sustainable solutions. Ultimately, the journey to ensuring women's safety and equality is not just a women's issue; it is a universal imperative. A world where women are safe and empowered is a world that thrives economically, socially, and culturally, advancing humanity as a whole.

References

Trinter P. Christine ,Huges .E Hilary (2021) "Teacher as curriculum Designers :Inviting Teachers into the productive struggle",Research in Middle level Education.

Huang Yuling, xie Youru ,Bai Yucheng ,Qiu Yi,(2022) "Design and effects of teacher student interaction model in online learning spaces".Journal of computing in Higher Education

'Exploring the impact of Gender Disparities in Educational settings:A comprehensive Analysis of factors influcing Academic Achievement and opportunities for equitable learning"

Mishra Kumar Sanjay "Gender Equality and Higher Education in India"July(2023) Stochastic Modeling and Application

Ramchandran Vimala "Towards Gender Equality in Education"(2009)National university of Education Planning and Administration,New Delhi

Singh Aradhana Kumari ,prof Rabindranath Munukonda (2020) "Gender Divine in Education in India",Journal of Critical Review

Bashir, S. (1994) Achievement performance at the primary level in public and private schools of Tamil Nadu. Indian Educational Review, 29 (3-4): pp. 1-

Bhan, G. (2001) India Gender Profile. Report Commissioned by SIDA. Report No. 62. Brighton: IDS.

Elwood, J. (1999) "Equity issues in performance assessment", *Educational Research and Evaluation*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 321-344.

Elwood, J. (2005) "Gender and achievement: what have exams got to do with it?", *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 373-393.

England, P., Allison, P., Li, S., Mark, N., Thompson, J., Budig, M. and Sun, H. (2004) *Why Are Some Academic Fields Tipping Toward Female?* Stanford, CA: Stanford University.

Epstein, D., Elwood, J., Hey, V. and Maw, J. (eds.) (1998). *Failing Boys? Issues in Gender and Achievement*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Epstein, D. (1998) "Real boys don't work: 'underachievement', masculinities and the harassment of 'sissies'", in Epstein, D., Elwood, J., Hey, V. and Maw, J. (eds.) (1998). *Failing Boys? Issues in Gender and Achievement*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

ETAN Expert Working Group on Women and Science (2000). *Science Policies in the European Union: Promoting Excellence through Mainstreaming Gender Equality*. Brussels: European Commission.

16

Entrepreneurship and the Role of Women: A Comparative Analysis of Socio-Cultural Differences between North (West Bengal) and South (Tamil Nadu) India

Sagarika Mondal

Abstract

In modern India, various backgrounds as well as industries, ranging from technology and ecommerce to textiles and agriculture, are entering into entrepreneurship ventures. Where the trend of women's entrepreneurship is rising, regional variation characterizes opportunities and challenges. The article explores the socio-cultural reasons behind women entrepreneurship in northern and southern India. Similarly, situation in northern India, such as states like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana, is somewhat complex, wherein traditional gender roles, low literacy among women, and lesser entrepreneurial networks restrict business aspirations in women. Still, success stories have emerged from small-scale manufacturing and the likes of fashion and food-based businesses in Delhi and Chandigarh. On the other hand, southern India enjoys a relatively congenial environment for women entrepreneurs with states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. With higher literacy levels, urbanisation and progressive approach towards gender relations, acceptance of women in business spheres, is spread at a higher rate across urban sectors like technology, healthcare and e-commerce. Both regions affect the entrepreneurial lives of women, but relatively higher latitude with regard to freedom and other related resources is found in South, as opposed to a rather more traditional Northern place, where the root has actually dug deeper into such tradition. This article reflects an essential need for the provision of policy with a regional dimension to sustain and promote women's entrepreneurship throughout India.

Keywords- *Entrepreneurship, Women-owned business, Socio-cultural Barrier, E-commerce, Ecosystem*

Research Questions

1. How do socio-cultural norms influence women's participation in entrepreneurship in north and south India?
2. How do societal perceptions of women entrepreneurs differ between North India (West Bengal) and South India (Tamil Nadu)?
3. What impact do marriage, motherhood, and traditional gender roles have on entrepreneurial aspirations of women in these regions?
4. What are the key similarities and differences in the entrepreneurial ecosystem for women in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu?
5. What are the success rates of women-owned businesses in West Bengal compared to Tamil Nadu, and how are they influenced by socio-cultural factors?
6. How do government policies and initiatives impact women's entrepreneurship in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu?

Literature Review

Ahmad Isa Abdullahi and FAKHRUL ANWAR ZAINO (2016) A Conceptual Approach to the Influence of the Socio-cultural Business Environment on Entrepreneurial Intention The purpose of this article was to look at the impact of the socio-cultural business environment on entrepreneurial motivation. The goal of this paper was to examine the influence of education, religion, and family history on the formation of entrepreneurs. In order to achieve the stated purpose, the study was based on a review of related literature. The study discovered that the Socio-cultural Business Environment is an important factor in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention, particularly in the emergence of new entrepreneurs.

The socio-cultural components that compose society's framework, according to Ule (2012), have a considerable impact on entrepreneur practise. These components affect or influence people's behaviour, values, belief systems, general attitude toward work, and roles in organisations.

Parvin et al. (2012) investigated the development of female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh and discovered distinct challenges and limits related to the socio-cultural environment. They argued that

working in a male-dominated world is too difficult. They also recommended concrete steps to be made in terms of policy implications and self-awareness.

Tiwari, N. (2017) observed that women's active participation in entrepreneurship can accelerate the country's socioeconomic growth. The study also found that despite the government's initiatives, women's entrepreneurs confront numerous challenges in India, are largely involved in unorganised sectors.

Sudeshna Mitra, Amit Kumar Hazra & Harpal S. Grewal (2023) in their article 'Training Need Assessment of Family Based Entrepreneurs in West Bengal: An Explorative Study' express those women operated enterprises got low success rate due to lack of their family support. They need to redefine their situation to get best possible outcome from the business and for these professional trainings are required.

DR. S KOTESWARI, M. Sri Uma Suseela, N. Mary Leena (April,2022) in their article 'Women Entrepreneurship and Skill Development: Issues, Challenges & Developments) express about the motivation of women like- their strong will to make independent decisions in their life, self-identity and social recognition somehow responsible to explore the entrepreneurship side. Skill development trainings in this regard help them to identify their interest.

Though numerous previous studies across various mega cities in India, especially which are capital of a state as well, have addressed much about the motivating factors that compelled women to pursue entrepreneurship (Shah, 1970, Tamilselvi, 2014, Hemavathi, 2015), there has been little research done for the mega city of Kolkata, the state capital of West Bengal. This research will be able to fill up the gap in identifying the motivating factors that encourages women to pursue entrepreneurship, and major problems encountered by them during their entrepreneurial activity in Kolkata.

Government reports and policy documents provide further insights into the status of women entrepreneurship in Tamil Nadu. The Government of Tamil Nadu (2020) outlined its vision for empowering women and promoting entrepreneurship in the state, highlighting initiatives such as skill development programs, financial assistance schemes, and market linkages for women entrepreneurs. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020) conducted a situational analysis of gender equality in Tamil Nadu, identifying barriers to women's economic participation and proposing strategies for promoting gender-inclusive policies and programs.

Global perspectives on women entrepreneurship offer valuable insights that can inform research and policy in Tamil Nadu. The OECD (2019) published a report on women entrepreneurs in the Asia-Pacific region, highlighting the importance of addressing gender disparities in access to finance, markets, and networks. The World Bank (2020) conducted a study on scaling up women's entrepreneurship, emphasizing the need for legal reforms, institutional support, and gender responsive policies to enable women's economic empowerment.

Devi and Subramaniam (2017) conducted an exploratory study on the problems faced by women entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu, identifying challenges such as limited access to finance, family responsibilities, and societal norms. Similarly, Deepika and Sasikala (2020) examined the problems and prospects of women entrepreneurs in Tiruchirappalli district, emphasizing issues related to finance, market access, and business support services.

Methodology

The research employs a qualitative approach, using primary data from interviews with women entrepreneurs and secondary data from government reports, academic papers, and statistical sources, scholarly articles to supplement primary research and provide context. Conduct a comprehensive review of existing literature on women entrepreneurship, focusing on studies specific to West Bengal Tamil Nadu. The study includes participants from urban and rural areas in both states to ensure a diverse representation. A thematic analysis identifies common challenges and regional distinctions.

This will provide a theoretical framework and background understanding of the topic. Provide recommendations for policymakers, stakeholders, and aspiring women entrepreneurs based on the research findings. Evaluate existing government policies and programs aimed at supporting women entrepreneurs in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. Analyse their effectiveness, implementation challenges, and potential areas for improvement.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a powerful driver of economic growth, innovation, and societal transformation. In this context, women entrepreneurs have made significant contributions, breaking barriers and challenging stereotypes globally. However, the

participation of women in entrepreneurial activities is deeply influenced by socio-cultural dynamics, which vary significantly across different regions. The cultural landscape, societal expectations, and traditional roles assigned to women create distinct obstacles that shape their entrepreneurial journey. While northern regions may offer relatively progressive opportunities due to greater urbanization and modern socio-economic structures, southern regions often reflect a deeper entrenchment of traditional values and norms. Understanding these variations provides valuable insights into the systemic barriers and the strategies needed to foster inclusivity and support for women entrepreneurs across diverse socio-cultural settings.

This paper explores the socio-cultural challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, focusing on a comparative analysis between the northern and southern regions mainly West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. The role of women entrepreneurs is vital in enhancing economic growth and achieving gender equality. In India, states like West Bengal and Tamil Nadu exhibit starkly different socio-cultural landscapes, which shape women's entrepreneurial journeys. This study aims to explore the challenges women face in these regions and identify similarities and differences in their experiences. The findings will provide insights into developing targeted policies to empower women entrepreneurs.

Women's Role in Entrepreneurship: A Regional Perspective

Societal expectations often confine women to traditional roles such as homemakers and caregivers, making it difficult for them to be taken seriously as entrepreneurs. There is a perception that women are not as capable in business as men. In many cases, women face resistance from family members, especially in conservative families, where women are expected to prioritize family responsibilities over career ambitions. This lack of support can limit their entrepreneurial pursuits. Though there has been progress, women still face barriers in accessing quality education and skill development opportunities. Many women in rural areas, in particular, have limited access to education that could help them develop entrepreneurial skills. Women entrepreneurs often face difficulty in accessing finance due to social biases in the financial sector, where banks and investors tend to favour male entrepreneurs. Women may also lack collateral or credit history, which further limits their access to loans and other financial resources. Business networks in India are often male-dominated, making it difficult for women to access key business contacts, mentorship, and

opportunities for collaboration. In many parts of India, there are cultural expectations that women should focus on household duties, leading to a lack of time or opportunity to focus on building a business. For instance, women may face difficulty accessing land titles, inheritance rights, and other legal support that could enhance their business operations.

West Bengal has seen a steady increase in women entering entrepreneurship across various sectors, including manufacturing, services, agriculture, and handicrafts. These women often balance societal expectations while navigating challenges to establish themselves in the entrepreneurial space. The state is particularly noted for its robust cottage and handicraft industries, where women play a pivotal role.

1. Handicrafts and Cottage Industries:

Traditional crafts like Kantha embroidery, terracotta art, and jute-based products are dominated by women entrepreneurs. These ventures are often small-scale and home-based, contributing significantly to rural incomes and cultural preservation.

2. Agriculture and Allied Activities:

Women in rural areas engage in agribusiness, including organic farming, livestock rearing, and food processing. Cooperative farming models are prevalent, empowering women through shared resources and knowledge.

3. Services Sector:

Urban areas like Kolkata have seen women entrepreneurs in sectors such as education, health, e-commerce, and hospitality. The rise of digital platforms has enabled many women to start online businesses, particularly in retail and personal services.

Women entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu have been increasingly contributing to the economy by participating in sectors ranging from traditional crafts to modern technology. Tamil Nadu ranks among the leading states in India in terms of women's entrepreneurial activity. The state's strong industrial base, supportive policies, and a progressive outlook on education have provided women with ample opportunities to enter the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Women entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu are active in urban and rural areas, bridging traditional enterprises and emerging industries.

1. Textiles and Handloom:

Tamil Nadu is a hub for the textile and garment industry, and women have been pivotal in this sector, particularly in small-scale handloom weaving and garment manufacturing. Cities like Coimbatore, Tirupur, and Erode are well-known for women entrepreneurs involved in textile production.

2. Agriculture and Processing:

Women in rural Tamil Nadu are engaged in agribusiness ventures, including organic farming, food processing, and floriculture. Entrepreneurial activities often revolve around creating value-added products like pickles, spices, and dairy products.

3. IT and Tech-Based Ventures:

Urban centres like Chennai have seen a rise in women-led startups in the IT, e-commerce, and tech-enabled service sectors. Technology-driven ventures have been boosted by Tamil Nadu's strong digital infrastructure and tech-friendly policies.

4. Education and Health Services:

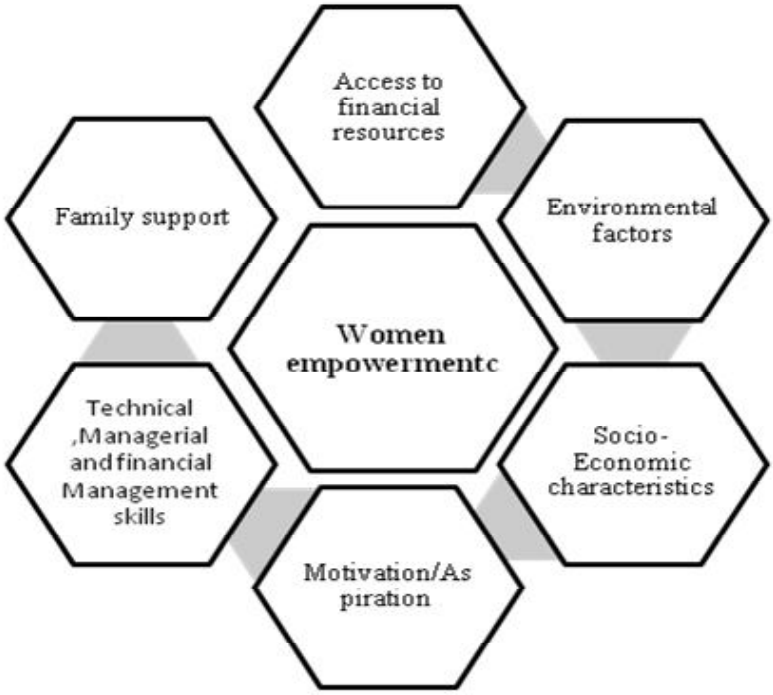
Women in Tamil Nadu are making significant contributions as entrepreneurs in education (private schools, coaching centres) and health services (clinics, wellness centres, and home healthcare services).

Socio-Cultural Barriers in West Bengal (North India) and Tamil Nadu (South India) faced by Women Entrepreneurs

Societal expectations often confine women to traditional roles such as homemakers and caregivers, making it difficult for them to be taken seriously as entrepreneurs. There is a perception that women are not as capable in business as men. In many cases, women face resistance from family members, especially in conservative families, where women are expected to prioritize family responsibilities over career ambitions. This lack of support can limit their entrepreneurial pursuits. Though there has been progress, women still face barriers in accessing quality education and skill development opportunities. Women entrepreneurs often face difficulty in accessing finance due to social biases in the financial sector, where banks and investors tend to favour male entrepreneurs.

Though India has made progress in empowering women, there are still gaps in policies and laws that support women entrepreneurs.

For instance, women may face difficulty accessing land titles, inheritance rights, and other legal support that could enhance their business operations. In many rural or less-developed regions, women face safety concerns when traveling or managing businesses. These security issues can restrict their mobility, preventing them from networking, meeting clients, or accessing markets. These socio-cultural barriers often create a complex web of challenges for women entrepreneurs in India, making it harder for them to thrive "(Dimopoulos,2020)".



Women in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu like many parts of India, are expected to prioritize family responsibilities over professional aspirations. The societal expectations often discourage women from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. There is a widespread belief that women are less capable of handling the risks and challenges of business ownership, which undermines their confidence. In many cases, financial and educational resources are preferentially allocated to male members of the family. Although Tamil Nadu has a relatively high literacy rate, women, particularly in rural areas, often lack exposure to business education and training programs. Limited access to entrepreneurial

knowledge hinders their ability to compete in a rapidly changing economic landscape. Even when women generate income, cultural norms may restrict their authority over how to use or reinvest that income. Women's participation in business networks and forums is limited, reducing their access to mentorship, partnerships, and market linkages "(Basu,2006)".

Socio-Cultural Influences and Coping Strategies

West Bengal:

Women in West Bengal face significant socio-cultural barriers stemming from patriarchal norms, societal expectations, and limited mobility. These barriers necessitate reliance on informal networks like family, friends, and local communities for financial and emotional support. Many women engage in micro or small-scale businesses, such as handicrafts, food processing, and local trade, which allow them to balance domestic responsibilities with entrepreneurial activities. The formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) has emerged as a crucial coping mechanism, providing women with collective strength, shared knowledge, and microcredit opportunities. However, traditional mindsets and a lack of role models in non-traditional industries restrict women's aspirations and growth.

Tamil Nadu:

Tamil Nadu exhibits a comparatively progressive socio-cultural environment, with higher female literacy rates and a greater acceptance of women in public and professional roles. Women entrepreneurs here often cope by actively participating in SHGs and utilizing government-sponsored training and capacity-building programs. The state's industrialized economy provides opportunities in diverse sectors, enabling women to move beyond traditional businesses to areas like manufacturing, IT, and e-commerce. Social entrepreneurship is also gaining traction as women seek to address community issues while sustaining their ventures. Networking, mentorship, and women-focused industrial policies further empower women to overcome challenges "(Kumar & Shobana, 2024)".

Table no 1. Comparative Analysis: West Bengal vs. Tamil Nadu

Parameter	West Bengal	Tamil Nadu
Policy Effectiveness	Focused on micro–enterprises with limited scalabilities.	Comprehensive addressing micro to large enterprises.
Institutional Framework	SHG centric with limited market and skill exposure.	Robust institutions offering holistic support.
Financial Inclusion	Predominantly micro finance with limited formal credit.	Subsidized loans, formal credit access and guarantees.
Skill Development	Localised and sector specific training.	Advanced industry specific training programs.
Market Access	Limited to local and regional market.	Strong digital and global market integration.
Sectoral Focus	Traditional sectors like handicrafts, food processing.	Diversified sectors, including IT, manufacturing, and e-commerce.

Access to Financial Resources

West Bengal:

Limited access to formal financial institutions compels women entrepreneurs in West Bengal to depend on microfinance institutions and SHG-led credit systems. The reliance on informal borrowing often restricts the scale of their ventures. Some women cope by adopting frugal innovation—doing more with limited resources—to manage their businesses effectively. Lack of awareness and cultural biases within financial institutions also create hurdles, forcing women to navigate financial challenges through family loans or local moneylenders.

Tamil Nadu:

Women entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu benefit from better access to formal financial channels, thanks to state-level initiatives like the Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women. Government-

backed schemes, such as subsidized loans and entrepreneurship grants, provide crucial financial support. SHGs in Tamil Nadu often act as intermediaries, helping women access institutional credit while minimizing reliance on informal sources. As a result, Tamil Nadu women are better positioned to scale their businesses and explore opportunities in capital-intensive sectors.

Skill Development and Training

West Bengal:

Skill development remains a challenge in West Bengal, especially in rural areas. Women cope by acquiring skills informally through local networks or learning on the job. Limited access to formal training programs forces many to focus on traditional sectors like handloom, small-scale farming, or food production. The lack of exposure to advanced technology and management practices further hinders their ability to innovate or expand their businesses.

Tamil Nadu:

Tamil Nadu's women entrepreneurs benefit from state-led training programs and institutional support aimed at capacity building. Initiatives like the MAHALIR THITTAM program focus on equipping women with technical and managerial skills, enabling them to compete in modern industries. Many women in Tamil Nadu actively seek out such programs to upskill and diversify their entrepreneurial activities, leading to greater innovation and competitiveness.

Implications of Social-cultural-psychological Constrains

Women entrepreneurship in India is profoundly influenced by socio-cultural and psychological factors, which shape their aspirations, opportunities, and performance. In West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, these constraints manifest differently due to varying societal norms, economic conditions, and policy interventions. The implications of these constraints are multifaceted, affecting not only the growth of women entrepreneurs but also the broader economic development of these states.

Impact on Entrepreneurial Entry

West Bengal:

The deeply ingrained patriarchal norms in West Bengal significantly limit women's entrepreneurial aspirations. Socio-cultural

expectations prioritize women's roles as caregivers over their professional ambitions, resulting in fewer women opting to start businesses. Psychological barriers, such as fear of failure and lack of self-confidence, further deter women from entrepreneurial pursuits. This restriction reduces diversity in the entrepreneurial ecosystem and perpetuates economic dependency among women.

Tamil Nadu:

While Tamil Nadu exhibits a relatively more supportive cultural environment, traditional gender roles still pose challenges, particularly in rural areas. Women may experience self-doubt due to societal scepticism about their ability to succeed in business, especially in male-dominated sectors. This limits their initial participation in entrepreneurial activities, although higher literacy rates and progressive policies help mitigate these effects to some extent.

Impact on Financial Independence

West Bengal:

Socio-cultural norms that restrict women's financial autonomy have significant implications for their entrepreneurial activities. Women in West Bengal often lack access to financial resources or the authority to make independent financial decisions, which stifles their ability to start or expand businesses. Psychological dependency on male family members for financial guidance exacerbates this issue, perpetuating cycles of economic dependence.

Tamil Nadu:

Tamil Nadu's women entrepreneurs benefit from slightly better financial inclusion due to state-level initiatives and SHG-led credit systems. However, traditional norms in rural areas still restrict women's financial decision-making authority. Psychological barriers such as fear of debt or failure often deter women from seeking loans or exploring high-investment opportunities, limiting their financial independence.

Work-Life Balance and Psychological Stress

West Bengal:

The dual burden of managing household responsibilities and entrepreneurial activities creates significant stress for women in West Bengal. The societal expectation that women must excel in both spheres

leaves them with limited time and energy to focus on business growth. This imbalance often leads to burnout and reduced productivity, further constraining their entrepreneurial success.

Tamil Nadu:

Tamil Nadu's women entrepreneurs, particularly in urban areas, benefit from a relatively better work-life balance due to greater acceptance of shared household responsibilities. However, rural women still face significant stress due to rigid societal norms. Psychological stress stemming from societal expectations to "prove themselves" further complicates their entrepreneurial journey.

Case Studies of Success Stories

Women entrepreneurs in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu have showcased remarkable resilience and innovation in overcoming socio-cultural and economic barriers. Their success stories not only highlight individual achievements but also provide valuable insights into the strategies and ecosystems that enable women-led ventures to thrive. Below are detailed case studies from both states:

Case Studies from West Bengal:

Sujata Chaudhury: Empowering Rural Artisans through Handicrafts

Sujata Chaudhury, a woman from a rural area in West Bengal, started her entrepreneurial journey to revive the traditional craft of kantha embroidery. With limited resources but immense determination, she turned her passion for preserving Bengal's cultural heritage into a thriving business. Sujata founded a small cooperative that trained local women artisans in modern designs while maintaining traditional techniques. Her focus was on creating marketable products such as home décor, garments, and accessories. By leveraging e-commerce platforms and participating in exhibitions, Sujata expanded her business internationally. Today, her cooperative supports over 500 rural women, providing them with a stable income and financial independence. Sujata's efforts have not only empowered rural women but also preserved a dying art form, earning her recognition at various national forums.

Arpita Mukherjee: Revolutionizing Organic Farming

Arpita Mukherjee, a former IT professional, left her corporate career to pursue sustainable farming in her native district of Burdwan.

She established an organic farm focused on producing pesticide-free fruits and vegetables. Arpita collaborated with local women farmers, training them in organic farming techniques. Through social media marketing and tie-ups with

urban organic food stores, Arpita created a loyal customer base. Her farm now generates significant revenue, and she has helped over 200 women adopt sustainable agricultural practices. Arpita's success has inspired other educated women to return to their roots and engage in agriculture.

Case Studies from Tamil Nadu:

Padmavathi Murugesan: **A Pioneer in Rural Technology**

Padmavathi, hailing from a rural village in Tamil Nadu, identified a gap in access to affordable technology for small-scale industries. Despite minimal educational qualifications, she had a keen interest in technical innovation. Padmavathi launched a start-up that designed low-cost machinery for small-scale food processing industries. Her products, such as automated grinders and packaging equipment, catered specifically to women entrepreneurs in rural areas. By collaborating with technical institutes and leveraging government grants for rural innovation, Padmavathi expanded her business across Tamil Nadu. Her company now generates an annual revenue of over [1] 10 crore. Padmavathi's affordable technology has revolutionized rural industries, enabling many women to establish and grow their businesses.

Kalpana Saravanan: Breaking Barriers in E-Commerce

Kalpana, an entrepreneur from Coimbatore, entered the e-commerce space by starting an online store specializing in traditional Tamil Nadu sarees. Her platform connects weavers from rural Tamil Nadu with urban and international buyers, ensuring fair prices for artisans. Kalpana's innovative marketing strategies, including influencer collaborations and storytelling about weavers, helped her brand gain prominence. Today, her business generates significant revenue and supports over 1,000 weavers. Kalpana's platform has preserved traditional weaving techniques while ensuring sustainable livelihoods for rural artisans.

Table no 2. Comparison of success stories

Parameter	West Bengal	Tamil Nadu
Focus Area	Handicrafts, organic farming	Technology, e-commerce
Challenges Overcome	Limited market access, societal resistance	Male dominated industries, High competition
Key Success Factor	Community involvement, cultural preservation	Technology adoption, Marketing innovation
Impact	Empowered rural women, preserved traditions	Enhanced rural industries, expanded markets

Both West Bengal and Tamil Nadu demonstrate the importance of supportive ecosystems. While Tamil Nadu benefits from structured government policies and industrial support, West Bengal showcases the power of grassroots initiatives and community-based networks. The case studies highlight that innovation, whether in technology or business models, plays a critical role in overcoming barriers and achieving success. Collaboration with local communities or artisans emerges as a common thread in these success stories, emphasizing the value of collective effort. Tamil Nadu entrepreneurs are leveraging technology to scale their businesses, while West Bengal focuses on traditional crafts with modern marketing techniques.

Findings:

Socio-Cultural Barriers

West Bengal: Patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles limit women's entrepreneurial aspirations. A lack of social support and resistance from families often restrict women's ability to pursue and expand their businesses. Women tend to focus on culturally "acceptable" ventures like handicrafts, food processing, and home-based businesses.

Tamil Nadu: While urban areas show progressive attitudes, rural women still face socio-cultural restrictions. Higher literacy rates and

awareness in Tamil Nadu encourage more women to break into non-traditional sectors like manufacturing and IT. A stronger presence of self-help groups (SHGs) fosters community support and collective empowerment.

Financial Challenges

West Bengal: Women entrepreneurs face difficulties in accessing credit due to limited collateral and lack of financial literacy. Microfinance institutions and SHG networks are the primary sources of funding, but these often restrict scalability.

Tamil Nadu: Government-backed initiatives like subsidized loans and women-focused credit schemes provide better financial access. Rural women, however, still rely on SHGs and informal sources, though with more structured support than in West Bengal.

Skill Development and Training

West Bengal: Limited access to vocational training and entrepreneurial skill-building programs hampers business growth. Women often acquire skills informally, which restricts their ability to innovate or compete in larger markets.

Tamil Nadu: Structured training programs like those under the MAHALIR THITTAM initiative enable women to acquire technical and managerial skills. Women in Tamil Nadu have better access to industrial training, making them more competitive in modern industries.

Policy and Institutional Support

West Bengal: Government initiatives for women entrepreneurs exist but are often poorly implemented or lack widespread awareness. Women entrepreneurs depend heavily on NGO-led programs for training and market access.

Tamil Nadu: Proactive state policies, such as women-only industrial parks and start-up incubators, create a conducive environment for women entrepreneurs. Programs like the Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women bridge the gap between rural and urban entrepreneurial needs.

Business Sectors

West Bengal: Women dominate traditional sectors like textiles, handicrafts, and small-scale retail due to socio-cultural constraints.

Participation in technology-intensive or male-dominated industries remains minimal.

Tamil Nadu: Women entrepreneurs are diversifying into manufacturing, IT, and e-commerce, particularly in urban areas. Traditional industries like weaving and food processing also thrive, supported by modern marketing strategies.

Networking and Market Access

West Bengal: Limited mobility and weak networking opportunities constrain market access for women entrepreneurs. E-commerce platforms are beginning to provide new avenues, but their reach is limited to urban entrepreneurs.

Tamil Nadu: Women entrepreneurs leverage state-backed networking platforms and SHGs to access markets and connect with mentors. Urban women have better access to global markets through technology and digital platforms.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice:

West Bengal needs a stronger implementation of existing policies and creation of women-focused industrial initiatives, introduce targeted microcredit schemes, promote financial literacy programs. The state should prioritize formal vocational training programs and exposure to technology. West Bengal needs to establish more networking platforms to connect women entrepreneurs with mentors and markets. Tamil Nadu can expand its successful programs to rural areas to ensure equitable growth, Expand women-focused banking initiatives in rural regions. Tamil Nadu can focus on advanced skill-building for rural women to help them diversify into high-growth sectors. The state should enhance digital literacy and e-commerce training for rural women.

Policymaking and Institutional Support in West Bengal

State-Level Initiatives:

West Bengal SWANIRBHAR SAHAYAK Prakalpa: Supports women in rural areas through self-help groups (SHGs) and microfinance schemes.

West Bengal State Rural Livelihood Mission (WBSRLM): Focuses on skill training, capacity building, and providing access to credit for rural women entrepreneurs.

Mahila Samriddhi Yojana: Encourages women to start small-scale businesses by offering subsidies and easy loan terms.

Challenges in Policy Implementation:

Limited awareness among women entrepreneurs about available schemes. Inconsistent policy execution and bureaucratic hurdles reduce the effectiveness of these initiatives. Policies are often micro-focused and lack a vision for scaling businesses to medium or large enterprises.

Institutional Support

Self-Help Groups (SHGs):

SHGs are the backbone of institutional support for women entrepreneurs in West Bengal. They provide access to microcredit and act as community networks that empower women socially and economically. However, SHGs often lack access to larger markets and advanced business training.

Policymaking and Institutional Support in Tamil Nadu

Proactive State Policies:

MAHALIR THITTAM: A flagship program for women's empowerment through SHGs, focusing on financial independence and entrepreneurial development. Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women (TNCDW): Offers skill development, entrepreneurship training, and financial assistance. Entrepreneurial Development and Innovation Institute (EDII): Provides start-up incubators, networking platforms, and access to funding for women entrepreneurs.

Women-Only Industrial Parks:

The state has established exclusive industrial parks for women entrepreneurs, providing infrastructure, subsidies, and marketing support. These parks encourage women to enter non-traditional industries like manufacturing and technology.

Institutional Support

Self-Help Groups (SHGs):

Tamil Nadu's SHG network is one of the strongest in India, supported by MAHALIR THITTAM and NABARD. SHGs not only provide microfinance but also act as platforms for skill training, market access, and community-based entrepreneurship.

Both states should invest in awareness campaigns to challenge societal norms and promote entrepreneurship as a viable career option for women. Highlighting and documenting more success stories can inspire future women entrepreneurs in both states.

Conclusion

The comparative study of women's entrepreneurship in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu reveals a complex interplay of socio-cultural factors that shape the entrepreneurial landscape in these regions. While both states demonstrate significant contributions by women to local economies, their entrepreneurial journeys differ due to distinct historical, cultural, and policy-driven influences. In West Bengal, women entrepreneurs often operate in industries tied to traditional crafts, retail, and food services, influenced by the state's rich cultural heritage and historical emphasis on artistry. However, challenges such as patriarchal social norms, limited access to financial resources, and infrastructural gaps have restricted the scale and growth of women's businesses.

In contrast, Tamil Nadu has emerged as a more supportive environment for women entrepreneurs, underpinned by progressive state policies, a robust microfinance network, and active self-help groups (SHGs). Women in Tamil Nadu are more likely to engage in diverse industries, including manufacturing, textiles, and IT services, with some achieving remarkable success at national and international levels. Cultural acceptance of working women and the availability of institutional support have further propelled their entrepreneurial growth. In conclusion, while both states showcase unique strengths and challenges, the study underscores the need for a multi-faceted approach combining education, financial inclusion, skill development, and societal change to create a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem for women. Future research could explore specific industry dynamics and the impact of digital transformation in bridging regional disparities.

References

1. Arumugam, U., & Manida, M. (2023). A study on somatic barriers and prospects of agri-women entrepreneurs in Tamilnadu. *Shanlax International Journal of Management, 11*(2), 25-31.
2. Banerjee, N. K. (1985). Women, participation and development: a case study from West Bengal.
3. Basu, J. P. (2006). Microfinance and women empowerment: An empirical

study with special reference to West Bengal. *Mumbai, India: Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research*.

4. Chhabra, M., Singh, L. B., & Mehdi, S. A. (2023). Women entrepreneurs' success factors of Northern Indian community.
5. Colaco, V., & Hans, V. (2018). Women entrepreneurship in India–Changes and challenges.
6. Dimopoulos, C. A. (2020). *Women empowered: The Purkal Project–weaving the fibers of transformation through education and entrepreneurship in rural northern India* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign).
7. Duhan, R. (2007). Women entrepreneurship in India. *Rural Entrep, 147*.
8. Firdaush, S., Baidya, S., Bera, U., & Kumbhakar, S. (2024). Green Growth Through Micro-Entrepreneurship: Empowering Women for Sustainable Development in West Bengal. In *Informal Manufacturing and Environmental Sustainability: A Global Perspective* (pp. 265-278). Emerald Publishing Limited.
9. Harpriya, Sharma, R. K., & Sah, A. N. (2024). Unorganised entrepreneurship and role of family supporting factors in women-owned micro-enterprises in North India. *European Journal of International Management, 23*(2-3), 495-515.
10. Kumar, J. S., & Shobana, D. (2024). A Study on Women Entrepreneurship in Tamil Nadu: Problem and Opportunity. *International Journal of Social Science, Management and Economics Research, 2*(3), 22-35.
11. Manimegalai, M., & Sundaravaradarajan, K. R. (2022). Problems Faced by Women Agri-Entrepreneur in Tamil Nadu: An Economic Analysis. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences, 11*(4), pp-1290.
12. Mathew, R. V., & Panchanatham, N. (2011). An exploratory study on the work-life balance of women entrepreneurs in South India. *Asian academy of management journal, 16*(2).
13. Neogi, C., Bhandari, A. K., & Ghosh, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Women's entrepreneurship and microfinance*. Springer Singapore.
14. Pradeepika, D. (2017). Women entrepreneurs in India: Socio-cultural issues and challenges. *International Journal of Development Research, 7*(12), 17403-17408.
15. Rajput, N., & Chopra, K. (2016). Women entrepreneurship in 21st century: India. *JIMS8M: The Journal of Indian Management & Strategy, 21*(2), 17-21.
16. Rani, E. (2021). Issues and challenges of women entrepreneurs in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) of Tamil Nadu. *International Journal of Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity, 12*(1), 425-435.

17. Samantroy, E., & Tomar, J. S. (2018). Women entrepreneurship in India: evidence from economic censuses. *Social Change, 48*(2), 188-207.a person–environment fit theory perspective. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy, 17*(6), 1293-1314.
18. SARANYA, M. S., & CHANDRASEKAR, K. SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA.
19. Selvi, R. Tamil, and G. Anitha Rathna (2023). "Challenges and Issues for Women Entrepreneurs in India." *Contemporary Issues and Trends in Digital Marketing. Mayas Publication*, 47-53.
20. Wajih, S. A. (2014). The impact of Socio-cultural values and its diffusion on entrepreneurial performance of Indian middle-class women entrepreneur.

17

Folk Crafts of Bengal and Women Development: A Multifaceted Analysis

Dr. Shipra Bhattacharjee

Abstract

Folk crafts and women development are two highly correlated and inter-connected facts in West Bengal – it is a place of several folk crafts – beginning from pattachitra to the Chau mask. Every folk craft has its own history of legacy and it has sustained over the centuries and has every potential to flourish even in the era of globalisation. All the folk crafts have good connection with women development because women are the integral part of these crafts. Beginning from preparation to selling in the market, fairs, exhibitions - both at the national and international level – women play the pivotal role in every aspect. Thus, development of folk crafts would actually strengthen women development. Present study focuses on all these aspects, in detail. It discusses the long history of different folk crafts in West Bengal, their present conditions, challenges, employability possibilities, government's role in revival and finally suggests certain policy recommendations on the basis of few case studies. Such an analysis is not only unique but deserves greater significance.

Keywords: *Folk Crafts, Women Development, Economic Condition, Social Implication, Case Studies, Sustainable Development.*

1. Introduction:

West Bengal has a vibrant tradition of folk arts and crafts that form an integral part of its cultural identity. These craft forms have been passed down through generations, with women playing a central role as both creators and custodians of this heritage. This study aims to analyze the multifaceted contributions of women artisans to West Bengal's folk craft sector by examining their artistic, economic, and social impacts. The folk crafts of West Bengal represent a significant aspect of the state's cultural identity and economic landscape. These

crafts, often passed down through generations, showcase intricate techniques and artistic expressions rooted in local traditions. While the overall contribution of these crafts to the economy is acknowledged, (Chakroborty, 2021) the specific role of women in their creation and sustenance remains under-researched. This paper addresses this gap by exploring the multifaceted involvement of women in these crafts, examining their socio-economic realities, and evaluating the implications for their empowerment.

The folk crafts of Bengal have played a significant role in women's development, offering a multifaceted approach to empowerment and economic growth. These traditional crafts, including weaving, embroidery, and pottery, have provided women with opportunities for self-expression, income generation, and skill development. The intricate art of Kantha embroidery, for instance, has been transmitted through generations, enabling women to showcase their creativity while earning a livelihood. Similarly, the delicate craftsmanship of Terracotta pottery has allowed women to transform clay into aesthetically pleasing, functional art pieces that are in demand in both local and international markets.

By preserving and promoting these crafts, women in Bengal have not only maintained their cultural heritage but also achieved financial independence and social recognition. The resurgence of interest in traditional Bengali textiles, such as Jamdani and Tant sarees, has created a thriving market for women weavers, enabling them to support their families and gain respect within their communities. This economic empowerment has led to increased decision-making authority for women within households and greater participation in community affairs.

The craft sector has enabled women to work from home, balancing familial responsibilities with economic activities. This flexibility has been particularly advantageous for rural women who may face mobility constraints or lack access to formal employment opportunities. By engaging in craft production at home, women can contribute to the household income while fulfilling their domestic duties, challenging traditional gender roles and promoting a more equitable division of labor within families.

Furthermore, the formation of women's cooperatives and self-help groups centered around folk crafts has fostered community building and collective bargaining power. These organizations have

provided a platform for women to share knowledge, pool resources, and collectively negotiate better prices for their products. The Shantiniketan Cooperative Society, for example, has empowered women artisans by providing them with training, marketing support, and access to fair trade markets. This has led to improved access to resources, markets, and financial services for women artisans.

Microfinance institutions and government initiatives have recognized the potential of the craft sector and have introduced targeted loan programs and skill development schemes for women artisans. These interventions have enabled women to invest in better tools, raw materials, and expand their production capacity, leading to increased income and improved living standards.

The revival and modernization of Bengal's folk crafts have also created new opportunities for women entrepreneurs, allowing them to innovate and adapt traditional techniques to contemporary tastes and global markets. Many women-led enterprises have successfully integrated traditional motifs with modern designs, creating unique products that appeal to urban and international consumers. This fusion of old and new has not only preserved the essence of Bengali folk art but also ensured its relevance in the modern world.

The impact of folk crafts on women's development extends beyond economic benefits. Engagement in these traditional arts has fostered a sense of pride and cultural identity among women artisans. It has also contributed to the preservation of indigenous knowledge and skills that might otherwise be lost in the face of rapid modernization. Moreover, the recognition of women's contributions to the craft sector has challenged societal norms and stereotypes, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in both rural and urban settings.

The success of women in the folk craft sector has inspired younger generations to take an interest in these traditional arts. Many educational institutions and vocational training centers now offer courses in Bengali folk crafts, ensuring the continuity of these skills and creating new employment opportunities for young women. This intergenerational transfer of knowledge not only secures the future of these crafts but also provides a sustainable pathway for women's economic empowerment.

Folk crafts of Bengal have emerged as a powerful tool for women's development, offering a unique blend of cultural preservation, economic opportunity, and social empowerment. As these traditional

arts continue to evolve and adapt to changing times, they remain a testament to the Gender Studies and Women Development.

The relationship between women, art, and society provides a valuable lens for understanding the evolving social circumstances of Indian women artisans. (Sarkar, 2023) Their artistic practices, once considered solely domestic activities, are increasingly recognized as valuable intellectual contributions to the global art world. (Sarkar, 2023) This global recognition can serve as a powerful motivator for rural women to continue their craft traditions, (Sarkar, 2023) contributing significantly to their socio-economic development and the overall well-being of their communities. (Sarkar, 2023) However, the path to empowerment for women artisans is fraught with challenges, including limited access to resources, market limitations, and societal expectations. (Chakroborty, 2021). The folk crafts of Bengal represent a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, deeply intertwined with the lives and livelihoods of its people, particularly women. This analysis explores the multifaceted relationship between these crafts and women's development in Bengal, examining their economic contributions, social implications, and the challenges they face in the context of modernization and globalization. The analysis will draw heavily on the provided research papers, highlighting both successes and persistent issues.

2. Key Folk Crafts and Women Involvement:

1. Kantha Embroidery:

Kantha, a form of embroidery used to prepare quilts and decorative items, is predominantly practiced by women. Crafts allow creative expression while utilizing recycled materials. Women kantha artisans have adapted traditional motifs to contemporary tastes, expanding their market appeal.

2. Terracotta Pottery:

While traditionally male-dominated, women are increasingly involved in terracotta production, especially decorative items. Their contributions have led to innovations in design and finishing techniques.

3. Dokra Metal Casting:

This ancient lost-wax casting technique has significant female participation, particularly in wax modelling and finishing. Women

artisans have introduced new product lines catering to urban and export markets.

4. Patachitra:

Women do take part in patachitra painting along with their husbands or other women in the family and also in the commercialisation process of the art. Hence from painting to selling of patachitra, women involvement is immensely significant. Even if Patachitra art is spread across the state of West Bengal, Midnapore district always occupies a unique position in creation as well as preservation of this art.

5. Chhau Mask:

Women involvement can be witnessed in preparation and selling of Chhau mask in Purulia. Women also play the pivotal role in Chhau dance.

3. Economic Contributions of Folk Crafts:

Many folk art forms in Bengal, such as Patachitra painting Madhubani painting (Das, 2024), Kantha embroidery (Das, 2024), and Dokra metal casting (Das, 2024), (Chakroborty, 2021), have traditionally been dominated by women. These crafts provide crucial income sources for women, often serving as the primary or supplementary means of economic support for their families (Datta, 2017). The Chhau mask-making tradition, integral to the Chhau dance, also involves women significantly in the production process (Das, 2024), (Chatterjee, 2021). However, the economic contribution often remains undervalued, with women artisans frequently receiving lower wages and facing limited access to markets and resources (Datta, 2017), Studies on the Dokra artisans, for example, highlight the marginalization of these communities despite their internationally recognized craft (Chakroborty, 2021) Similarly, research on Bodo women weavers in Assam's Sualkuchi silk industry reveals that while women constitute a significant portion of the workforce (55%), a large percentage are paid workers with limited entrepreneurial opportunities. This underscores the need for fair compensation and empowerment initiatives to improve the economic status of women artisans.

The situation is further complicated by the challenges of preserving and actualizing the heritage of folk-art crafts. The commodification of these crafts poses a significant risk, potentially leading to exploitation

and the erosion of traditional techniques and cultural values. The influx of urbanization, globalization, and westernization poses a tremendous challenge to Bengal's folk culture, impacting the demand for traditional crafts and threatening the livelihoods of women artisans (Chatterjee, 2021).

4. Social Implications and Cultural Identity:

Beyond their economic value, folk crafts play a vital role in shaping women's social identity and preserving cultural heritage (Semwal, 2024), (Yurdanidze, 2021), (Mihaylova, 2024). The intricate designs and symbolic patterns often reflect the aspirations and beliefs of the communities (Semwal, 2024). For instance, in Broto folk art, floor designs served as rituals related to well-being, reflecting societal shifts over time (Semwal, 2024). The transmission of these skills across generations strengthens community bonds and fosters a sense of collective identity. The participation of women in these crafts also empowers them within their communities, providing them with a sense of agency and recognition (Datta, 2017). However, the social standing of women artisans can vary significantly depending on caste and community (Anowar, 2023). The Malo community, for example, faces marginalization despite their rich cultural heritage (Anowar, 2023). The study of the Gond community in Odisha further emphasizes the importance of preserving their art, crafts, and dances as significant aspects of their cultural heritage (Majhi, 2023). These traditions, often carried out by women, are vital for maintaining their unique identity and cultural continuity.

The role of folk art in ethnocultural education is also crucial (Martynova, 2020). Introducing integrated programs with ethnic and art components can help revive interest and ensure the preservation of these traditions for future generations (Martynova, 2020). The teaching of folk arts and crafts contributes to the formation of artistic taste, love for one's homeland, and respect for age-old cultural traditions (Poltavska, 2021), (Yurdanidze, 2021). This is particularly important in the context of modernization and globalization, where traditional knowledge and skills risk being lost. The study on the Yimeng folk cloth handcrafts in China highlights the importance of studying the art form and regional characteristics to excavate, protect, and inherit outstanding folk arts and crafts (Feng, 2016). In the context of Brazil, the rich folk culture, including crafts, is viewed as a defining aspect of national identity, influencing all aspects of society from mass culture to social policy (Malkovskaya, 2023).

5. Case Studies and Comparative Analysis:

Several case studies in the provided documents illustrate the diverse experiences of women artisans in Bengal and beyond. The study of Chhau mask makers in Charida village provides insight into the making procedure and the people associated with this traditional folk art (Das, 2024). The research on Dokra artisans in West Bengal examines their history, migration patterns, and socioeconomic conditions (Chakroborty, 2021). The analysis of Bodo women weavers in Assam's Sualkuchi silk industry reveals the economic challenges and opportunities they face. These case studies, while geographically distinct, highlight common themes of economic marginalization, the importance of preserving traditional skills, and the need for support and empowerment initiatives. A comparative analysis of these case studies reveals the need for tailored strategies that address the specific needs and contexts of different communities. For instance, the challenges faced by women artisans in the zari cluster of Panchla, West Bengal (Datta, 2017), are similar to those faced by Bodo women weavers in Assam but the specific issues and solutions may vary depending on the craft, community, and regional context. The Dokra craft, a unique metal casting technique practiced in various parts of India, including West Bengal, (Chakroborty, 2021) offers a compelling case study for understanding the role of women in folk crafts. The Dokra artisans, primarily from the Malhar community, (Chakroborty, 2021) have a history of migration following mineral-rich regions. (Chakroborty, 2021) While the craft has gained international recognition as a brassware handicraft, (Chakroborty, 2021) the Dokra artisans remain marginalized from a business perspective. (Chakroborty, 2021)

While Dr. Sibnath Sarkar's study focuses on women's work participation in the Dokra handicraft at Bikna village in Bankura district, (Sarkar, 2023) a more comprehensive understanding requires considering the broader context outlined by Ratnadip Chakroborty et al.'s empirical study, which examines two Dokra artisan communities in West Bengal. (Chakroborty, 2021) This study utilizes a qualitative approach, employing in-depth interviews, focused group discussions, and oral history to gather data. (Chakroborty, 2021) The findings reveal a complex reality where women are actively involved in various stages of the Dokra process, yet their contributions may not always be fully recognized or adequately compensated. (Chakroborty, 2021) This highlights the need for further research to quantify the specific

contributions of women within the Dokra craft and other folk arts in West Bengal.

6. Challenges and Opportunities:

Challenges Faced by Women Artisans:

Women artisans in West Bengal face a multitude of challenges that hinder their full participation and economic advancement. These challenges are often intertwined and interconnected, reflecting broader socio-economic inequalities.

Limited Access to Resources: Women artisans often have limited access to crucial resources, including credit, (Chakroborty, 2021) training, (Chakroborty, 2021) and technology. (Chakroborty, 2021) This restricts their ability to expand their businesses, improve their skills, and increase their productivity. Lack of access to adequate infrastructure also poses a significant barrier. (Chakroborty, 2021) This is especially true in rural areas, where many women artisans reside.

Market Limitations: The market for folk crafts can be unpredictable and competitive. (Chakroborty, 2021) Women artisans frequently lack the marketing skills and networks needed to effectively sell their products, (Chakroborty, 2021) resulting in lower incomes and limited economic opportunities. The lack of formal marketing channels and the domi2021ce of middlemen further marginalize them. (Chakroborty, 2021)

Societal Expectations: Traditional gender roles and societal expectations often limit women's participation in craft production. (Chakroborty, 2021) They may bear the primary responsibility for household chores and childcare, (Chakroborty, 2021) leaving them with limited time and energy to devote to craft-making. Social norms may also restrict their mobility and access to markets. (Chakroborty, 2021)

Health and Safety Concerns: Many folk crafts involve the use of hazardous materials and tools. (Ganguly, 2021) Women artisans may be exposed to health risks without adequate safety measures or protective equipment. (Ganguly, 2021) The lack of awareness regarding occupational health hazards and limited access to healthcare further exacerbates these problems. (Ganguly, 2021)

Potential for Empowerment:

Despite the numerous challenges, there is significant potential for empowering women artisans in West Bengal through various strategies:

Skill Development and Training: Providing women artisans with access to quality training programs can enhance their skills, improve the quality of their products, and increase their earning potential. (Yadav, 2022) These training programs should also incorporate modern techniques and business management skills. (Yadav, 2022)

Improved Market Access: Facilitating access to wider markets is crucial. This can be achieved through the development of marketing cooperatives, (Yadav, 2022) participation in craft fairs and exhibitions, (Yadav, 2022) and the promotion of online sales platforms. (Yadav, 2022) Supporting the creation of sustainable supply chains and reducing the domi2021ce of middlemen are also essential. (Yadav, 2022)

Financial Inclusion: Providing women artisans with access to microcredit and other financial services can enable them to invest in their businesses, purchase raw materials and expand their operations. This requires the development of tailored financial products that address the specific needs and circumstances of women artisans.

Policy and Legislative Support: Government policies and legislation play a crucial role in promoting the welfare and empowerment of women artisans. (Romano, 2020) These policies should focus on providing access to resources, (Romano, 2020) improving market access, (Romano, 2020) and ensuring fair wages and working conditions. (Romano, 2020) The implementation of protective laws and regulations to ensure safety and health is also essential. (Romano, 2020). Government and NGO interventions play a crucial role in supporting women artisans and promoting the sustainable development of West Bengal's folk crafts. This includes the implementation of policies that promote gender equality and provide access to resources for women entrepreneurs (Yadav, 2022). Government initiatives aimed at skill development, market access, and the preservation of cultural heritage can significantly benefit women artisans (Yadav, 2022). NGOs can play a vital role in providing training, facilitating market linkages, and advocating for the rights and interests of women artisans (Shah, 2011). The case study of Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) highlights the positive impact of corporate social responsibility initiatives in empowering rural women

and promoting sustainable development (Shah, 2011). However, this study also points to the need for more real-life case studies showcasing the best practices of leading organizations in this context. Furthermore, the initiatives need to be designed and implemented with careful consideration of the specific needs and contexts of women artisans in different regions and craft traditions.

Social Awareness and Advocacy: Raising social awareness about the importance of women's participation in folk crafts can help challenge traditional gender roles and promote greater recognition of their contributions. (Dutta, 2021) Advocacy groups and NGOs play a critical role in this regard by empowering women artisans and advocating for their rights. (Dutta, 2021)

7. Empowerment Strategies and Sustainable Development:

Addressing the challenges faced by women artisans requires a multi-pronged approach focusing on empowerment and sustainable development. This includes providing access to credit and financial resources, promoting skill development and training programs, and facilitating market access through fair trade initiatives and digital platforms (Yadav, 2022). Empowering women artisans also involves challenging traditional gender roles and promoting greater participation in decision-making processes within their communities and craft organizations (Dube, 1998).

Initiatives that promote collective action and the formation of women's self-help groups can enhance their bargaining power and market access (Yadav, 2022). The Barefoot College approach, as described by Roy and Hartigan, offers a valuable model for empowering the rural poor through capacity building and participatory development (Roy, 2008). This model emphasizes the importance of allowing communities to decide for themselves how they want to improve their quality of life, a crucial element in empowering women artisans to take control of their craft-based livelihoods (Roy, 2008). The study by Pansera and Owen on inclusive innovation in India also provides insights into the importance of participatory approaches in development initiatives (Pansera, 2017). However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of such approaches and ensure that they are culturally sensitive and contextually relevant

8. Conclusion:

The folk crafts of Bengal are not merely artistic expressions; they

are integral to the economic livelihoods, social identities, and cultural heritage of the region, particularly for women. While these crafts provide crucial income and a sense of cultural pride, women artisans face significant challenges relating to economic marginalization, access to resources, and the pressures of modernization and globalization. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that combines economic empowerment initiatives, the preservation of traditional skills, and the integration of folk crafts with modern technologies and markets. The success of such initiatives depends on collaborative efforts between artisans, government agencies, educational institutions, and the wider community to ensure the sustainability of these valuable crafts and the empowerment of women who create them. Further research is needed to fully understand the complexities of this relationship and to develop effective strategies for sustainable development that value both the cultural and economic contributions of women artisans. The papers provided offer a starting point for this important work, highlighting the need for continued investigation into the specific challenges and opportunities faced by different communities and crafts. The rich heritage represented by these crafts deserves to be preserved and celebrated, ensuring that the skills and traditions are passed down to future generations, and that women artisans receive the recognition and support they deserve. The integration of traditional crafts with modern approaches, as suggested in several of the papers (Jianbiao, 2019), represents a promising path forward, but requires careful consideration of cultural sensitivity and ethical practices to avoid commodification and exploitation. The development of appropriate educational programs, as discussed in various papers (Lovtsova, 2021), (Uhrinov, 2016), represents a crucial element in ensuring the long-term preservation and transmission of these important cultural traditions. The effective implementation of such strategies requires collaborative efforts and a nuanced understanding of the specific needs and challenges faced by each community and craft.

Women play a crucial, yet often invisible, role in the folk crafts of West Bengal. Their contributions are vital to the preservation of cultural heritage and the economic well-being of their communities. However, they face significant challenges related to access to resources, market limitations, societal expectations, and health and safety concerns. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach that includes skill development and training, improved

market access, fi2021cial inclusion, policy and legislative support, and social awareness and advocacy. By empowering women artisans, we not only support their economic advancement but also contribute to the preservation of West Bengal's rich cultural heritage and the promotion of gender equality. Further research is needed to quantify the economic contributions of women in specific crafts and to explore the effectiveness of various empowerment strategies. The case of Dokra craft serves as a compelling example of the need for such research, highlighting the complexities of women's roles in traditional craft production and the potential for their empowerment through targeted interventions. (Sarkar, 2023), (Chakroborty, 2021), (Yadav, 2022), (Romano, 2020), (Dutta, 2021)

References

1. Anowar, T. (2023). A cultural study of malo community in the novel a river called titash. International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research. https: / / doi.org / 10.36948 / ijfmr.2023.v05i03.3806
2. Chakroborty, R., Chatterjee, S., Choudhury, D., & Chakraborty, R. (2021). Changing paradigm of life: an empirical study among the dokra brasscasters in West Bengal, India.
3. Chatterjee, A., Bhattacharya, S., & Mukherjee, J. (2021). Nature, culture and oriental heritage: ethnographic explorations on patua and chhau communities of bengal. The Oriental Anthropologist: A Bi-annual International Journal of the Science of Man. https: / / doi.org / 10.1177 / 0972558X211041675
4. Chatterjee, J. & D'Silva, N. (2021). A study on the role of social media in promoting sustainable tourism in the states of assam and odisha. Emerald Publishing Limited. https: / / doi.org / 10.1108 / trc-09-2020-0017
5. Das, A. (2023). A study of scroll painting in indian art with special reference of west bengal folk art. ShodhKosh Journal of Visual and Performing Arts. https: / / doi.org / 10.29121 / shodhkosh.v4.i2se.2023.485
6. Das, S. (2024). The astonishing beauty of chhau mask: an empirical study on the traditional folk art of charida village of purulia district, west bengal. International Education and Research Journal. https: / / doi.org / 10.21276 / ierj24564432459757
7. Datta, D., Mukherjee, S., Banerjee, T., Das, P., Mundhra, N., & Divya, A. N. (2017). Hindrances and challenges faced by women artisans in panchla zari cluster. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.5958 / 2321-5763.2017.00033.6

8. Dube, L. (1998). Women and kinship: comparative perspectives on gender in south and south-east asia. Association of College and Research Libraries. https: / / doi.org / 10.5860 / choice.35-3943
9. Feng, L. (2016). Study on the art form and regional characteristics of yimeng folk cloth handcrafts. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.2991 / ICADCE-16.2016.24
10. Herrow, M. F. M. & Azraai, N. Z. (2021). Digital preservation of intangible cultural heritage of joget dance movement using motion capture technology. International Journal of Heritage Art and Multimedia. https: / / doi.org / 10.35631 / ijham.415001
11. Jianbiao, H. (2019). Development strategy on cultural perspective and innovation of chinese traditional arts and crafts. None. https: / / doi.org / None
12. Lovtsova, I., Burovkina, L., & Sheshko, A. S. (2021). Preservation of the intangible cultural heritage through the implementation of additional general education programs in the field of fine arts. Revista Tempos e Espaos em Educao. https: / / doi.org / 10.20952 / revtee.v14i33.15929
13. Majhi, H. & Mohapatra, R. (2023). Study on arts, crafts and dances of the gond community of nuapada district in odisha. ShodhKosh Journal of Visual and Performing Arts. https: / / doi.org / 10.29121 / shodhkosh.v4.i1.2023.1814
14. Malkovskaya, I. A. (2023). Brazil: roots of popular culture (experience of interpretations). None. https: / / doi.org / 10.46272 / 2409-3416-2023-11-3-107-130
15. Martynova, N. V. & Martynov, V. V. (2020). Role of folk art in ethnocultural education of children and youth. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.31483 / r-86073
16. Mihaylova, N. (2024). Fostering national identification and patriotism based on folk art. Journal of Pedagogical Studies. https: / / doi.org / 10.12737 / 2500-3305-2024-9-5-82-90
17. Mondal, S. (2022). A discourse on patachitra art with narratives and songs in religious and cultural scenario of West Bengal.
18. Pansera, M. & Owen, R. (2017). Framing inclusive innovation within the discourse of development: insights from case studies in india. Elsevier BV. https: / / doi.org / 10.1016 / j.respol.2017.09.007
19. Poltavska, Y. (2021). Traditions and modern trends of professional training of artists of decorative and applied art. Scientific papers of Berdiansk State Pedagogical University Series Pedagogical sciences. https: / / doi.org / 10.31494 / 2412-9208-2021-1-3-150-156
20. R.P., N. & Hirsch, E. (2000). Commercialisation of non-timber forest products: review and analysis of research. None. https: / / doi.org / 10.17528 / cifor / 000723

21. Semwal, V., Guha, S., & Chakrabarti, D. (2024). From tradition to transformation: exploring broto folk art of bengal. The Chitrolekha Journal on Art and Design. https: / / doi.org / 10.21659 / cjad.81.v8n105

22. Swiderska, K., Argumedo, A., Wekesa, C., Ndalilo, L., Song, Y., Rastogi, A., & Ryan, P. (2022). Indigenous people's food systems and biocultural heritage: addressing indigenous priorities using decolonial and interdisciplinary research approaches. Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute. https: / / doi.org / 10.3390 / su141811311

23. Uhrinov, M., Kouchov, M., & Zentko, J. (2016). Folk dance as a tool of mutual communication with regard to primary education.

24. Yadav, U. S., Tripathi, R., Yadav, G. P., & Tripathi, M. A. (2022). Proposal of a global handicraft index for sustainable development: a visionary approach for small industry and developing strategies for handicraft (rural industry). Lectito Journals. https: / / doi.org / 10.21601 / ejosdr / 11909

25. Yurdanidze, M. K. (2021). Formation of national consciousness through teaching uzbek folk applied art to students. CURRENT RESEARCH JOURNAL OF PEDAGOGICS. https: / / doi.org / 10.37547 / pedagogics-crjp-02-12-22

18

Status of Women: A Comprehensive Study of the Women in Politics in India

Sk Abdul Amanullah

Abstract

Women play an important role in Indian society. Ancient Indian women had a high social status and were in excellent health. In terms of equality, education, marriage and family life, caste and gender, religion and culture, women in contemporary Indian society preserve or diminish their ancient and medieval status. Vedic women enjoyed financial independence. Some women were working as teachers. The place of production was the home. Clothes were made at home by spinning and weaving. Women also help their husbands in agricultural work. In the religious sphere, women enjoyed full rights and often participated in rituals along with their husbands. Both husband and wife participated in religious rituals and sacrifices. Even religious discussions saw active participation of women. The status of women improved somewhat throughout the Buddhist period, but not much. Women have an important place in ancient Indian literature. Many educated women lived in ancient India. women in politics in India, focusing on their representation, challenges faced, and the impact of their involvement. It examines the historical background, highlighting key figures and milestones in women's political empowerment. The study explores the current state of women's representation in Indian politics, identifying factors contributing to their underrepresentation. It discusses the reservation policy and its impact on increasing women's participation at the grassroots level. Additionally, the study investigates the impact of women in politics on policymaking and governance, emphasizing the positive influence they have on various issues. It delves into the challenges and barriers faced by women in Indian politics, including gender biases, stereotypes, and violence. Furthermore, the study suggests measures to empower women in politics, such as internal party reforms, education, training. programs,

and legal reforms. It highlights success stories of women leaders who have broken barriers and served as role models. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for comprehensive efforts to address gender disparities and create an inclusive and empowering environment for women in Indian politics. In this paper discuss the status of women: a comprehensive study of the women in politics in India.

Keywords: *women politics, representation, empowerment, government, ancient*

INTRODUCTION:

Women played the most important role in the Indian social structure. Certainly, in Rig Vedic India, women had a high social position and an excellent standard of living. Even women were given the opportunity to reach higher levels of intellectual and spiritual achievement. However, after enjoying unrestricted and prestigious roles in the Rigvedic society, women faced discrimination during the later Vedic age in terms of education and other rights and facilities. Indian culture does not believe that we are now witnessing a significant revolution for women. Women's voices are becoming more prominent in legislatures, courts, and public spaces. The Indian Constitution has always provided women equal rights as men, unlike the West, where women had to struggle for more than a century to obtain some of their fundamental rights, such as the ability to vote. In terms of equality, education, marriage and family life, caste and gender, religion and culture, women in contemporary Indian society preserve or diminish their ancient and medieval status. The purpose of this essay is to raise awareness and provide insight into the issues that women have faced from time to time and what their role has been. The essay will enable us to imagine how women participated in the social, religious, economic and domestic spheres in ancient times. The role of women in politics is a subject of profound significance and study in the context of India, a country known for its rich tapestry of culture, diversity, and democratic governance. This analytical study delves into the intricate dynamics surrounding the participation of women in Indian politics. It seeks to shed light on the challenges, opportunities, and evolving trends that have shaped the landscape of women's political representation in India.

Furthermore, the study will present a contemporary assessment of the current state of women in politics in India, offering insights into recent trends, achievements, and ongoing struggles. It will also

consider the role of women in various political parties and their representation in legislative bodies at the national and state levels. As we embark on this analytical journey, it is important to recognize that the participation of women in politics is not merely a matter of numerical representation but a reflection of a broader struggle for gender equality and social justice. This study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding women's participation in Indian politics and the implications it holds for the nation's democratic future. Through rigorous analysis and insightful observations, it seeks to provide a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities facing women in politics in India.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN EARLY INDIAN SOCIETY:

The status of women in India has been subjected to great changes over the past years. The status of women social, economic, political and common sphere in India today is much higher than in ancient and medieval periods. Though the status of women has been raised in the eyes of law, but they are still much far from equality with males. The ancient Indian society was a noble and respectful position of women. There were references in the ancient literature that they had given counsel to men in their society. To respect women as Goddesses by saying that "Yatra Naryastu Pujyanta Ramante Tatra Devatha" means where women are held in respect, there dwells the goddess (Satisfaction and Happiness). During the Vedic Period women used to participate actively in public life. They enjoyed freedom as they could move in the company of her husband or lovers. They usually had an important position in social gathering. In this way, women had liberty of all kinds during the Vedic Period. A woman was equal to man in the religious, public and educational fields. Study of the Vedas, singing, playing music and dance were not prohibited for women. She was not deprived of education. She would be married in her adulthood with her consent. Women from good and eminent families took education of various branches during this period. They possessed property, they took share in sacrifices and religious duties; they attended great assemblies and state occasions; they also distinguished themselves in science and learning. During the later periods of Indian history, some of the beliefs and rituals relating to salvation had already given priority to a son over a daughter. A daughter could only hold a right to private property in the absence of a son. It was the son and not the daughter who could perform the last rites (cremation) of his dead parents and could perform shraddh and

Pinddan required for the salvation of his parents. It must be noted that these performances were prohibited in Vedas and the Shrimad Bhagwat Gita but can be seen in Puranas. Garuda Purana says, "there is no salvation for a man without a son" This is the one of the common traditional practices based on gender discrimination with girl child birth and female sex ratio remains always very low. If the girl born otherwise they were killed otherwise live a derogatory life. During the first Muslim invasion in the eighth century and the second invasion in the eleventh century, there was a gradual decline of social, political, economic, and cultural life of women, particularly Hindu women. Mohammad Ghazni conquered India in the eleventh century and from this period till the eighteenth century Mughals ruled in India. In this period, several gender inequalities had surfaced the Indian society. Practices like PudahPratha, Sati Pratha, Child marriage, polygamy, female feticides etc, were the biggest social evils of the post-Vedic period.

Later the downfall of Mugal Empire, the British established their supremacy over the Indian people. During British rule, lots of changes were made in the economic and social structures of our society. Though the quality of life of women during this period remained more or less the same, some substantial progress was achieved in eliminating inequalities between men and women. Social evils such a child marriage, Sati Pratha, devdasi system, Pardahpratha, prohibition of widow remarriage etc. which were great hurdles in the path of women's progress, were either controlled by the efforts of reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and VidyaSagar or removed by suitable legislations. Many women reformers such as Pandita Ramabai also fight for the tribulations of women. Women like Bhikaji Cama, Dr. Annie Besant, Vijaya lakshmi Pandit, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kriplani etc. played an important role in India's independence struggle. Sarojini Naidu, a poet and freedom fighter, was the first Indian women to become president of the Indian National Congress and the first women to become the governor of a state in India.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE 21st CENTURY:

Women do not yet have control over their destiny, and they are treated differently by society. Today, living in the same nation, society and culture as men, they are deprived of their basic human rights and ridiculed by the patriarchal society; As a result, they have not yet achieved their status. They have not left their four walls since the

evening, and today they were attacked by male members of the society in a deep forest, on a small road, in an empty field, in the afternoon., and were attacked at night during a storm. They are inferior to men because they are of the feminine gender; they are women; Others"; they do not have masculine gender. The issue of gender equality is raised again and will continue until it is practically established as women are still excluded from society even in the second decade of the twenty-first century. has not attained its true status. According to the famous Indian philosopher Swami Vivekananda, just as a bird can fly in the sky with its two wings, the society is managed by the equal participation of both males and females.

CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY:

What is the benefit to a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul? Unfortunately, the vast majority of Indian female citizens are yet to experience the same freedom and equality that Indian women have. When brief research is done using facts, the consequences of favouring male children over girl children are extremely surprising, very disturbing, and yet it is still prevalent in practically all regions and all groups of people in India. are generally prevalent. Is this a country of mass murders? is the question that comes up. Doesn't a girl child in our culturally and spiritually enlightened country have the right to a peaceful birth and equal respect as a male child? Although as a country we are proud of our strong family values, how many of us actually live in an "artificial balance "Live in families where women are killed for giving birth to sons? Ultimately, how we handle one family relationship will ultimately impact all other family relationships. One of the fundamental institutions of civilization is marriage. A major component of national development is the family unit that the society has created. An unstable and chaotic society will be created by an unhappy, imbalanced family and its offspring.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE WOMEN IN POLITICS IN INDIA:

The historical background of women in politics in India is a complex and multifaceted narrative that spans centuries, marked by significant milestones, movements, and gradual progress towards greater inclusion and representation. To understand the present state of women in Indian politics, it is essential to explore this historical context:

- **Pre-Independence Era (Ancient and Medieval India):** In ancient and medieval India, women often had prominent roles in governance and administration. Examples include the likes of Rani Padmini and Rani Durgavati. However, these were exceptions rather than the norm, and women's political participation remained limited.
- **Post-Independence Period (1947 onwards):** After gaining independence in 1947, India adopted a democratic constitution that guaranteed equality for all citizens, regardless of gender. The right to vote was extended to women, and women started participating in electoral politics. In 1952, India held its first general election, and several women were elected to the Constituent Assembly.
- **Reservation for Women**: To address the underrepresentation of women in political offices, India introduced reservation policies at the local level in the form of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992 mandated that one-third of seats in local rural and urban bodies be reserved for women.
- **Challenges and Gender Disparities**: Despite advancements, women in Indian politics faced numerous challenges, including patriarchal attitudes, violence, and unequal access to resources and opportunities. The gender gap in political participation persisted.
- **Contemporary Developments**: In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need for greater women's participation in politics. Some states have experimented with increasing reservation quotas, and women have assumed leadership roles in major political parties.

REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION:

Representation and participation of women in Indian politics are crucial aspects of the broader discourse on gender equality and democratic governance. This section of the analytical study explores the dynamics of women's representation and participation in Indian politics, shedding light on the challenges, opportunities, and evolving trends.

- **Numerical Representation**: Despite progress over the years, women's numerical representation in Indian politics still falls short of gender parity.

- **Reservation Policies**: One significant step towards enhancing women's representation has been the introduction of reservation policies. As mentioned earlier, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments mandated one-third of seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and urban local bodies to be reserved for women.
- **Challenges and Barriers:** Women in Indian politics face numerous challenges, including societal norms, patriarchy, political violence, and unequal access to resources. Women are often viewed as "proxy" candidates for male family members and are subjected to harassment and discrimination within political parties and during campaigns.
- **Women's Movements and Advocacy**: Various women's movements and civil society organizations continue to advocate for gender equality in politics. These groups raise awareness, provide training and support for women candidates, and push for policy changes that promote women's political participation.
- **Media and Public Perception:** The role of media in shaping public perception of women in politics is significant. Positive media coverage can inspire more women to enter politics and counter gender stereotypes. However, negative, or biased reporting can reinforce existing biases and discourage women from participating.
- **Youth and Emerging Trends**: There is a growing trend of young women entering politics, particularly at the local level. This influx of fresh talent brings new perspectives and energy to the political arena, potentially reshaping the landscape of women's participation in the years to come.

RESEVATION POLICY:

Reservation policies have been a critical and transformative component of women's participation in politics in India. These policies were introduced with the intention of addressing the historical underrepresentation of women in political leadership roles. In this section of the analytical study, we delve into the reservation policies for women in Indian politics, their impact, and the ongoing debates surrounding them.

- **Positive Impact at the Local Level:** The reservation policy for women in PRIs has had several positive outcomes. It has led to a substantial increase in the number of women elected as Sarpanches (village heads) and members of local governing bodies. This increased representation has resulted in greater attention to issues related to women, children, and marginalized communities in local governance.
- **Women's Empowerment**: Reservation policies at the local level have empowered women who were previously excluded from political decision-making. It has given them a platform to voice their concerns, participate in developmental initiatives, and challenge traditional power structures.

IMPACT OF WOMEN IN POLITICS:

The impact of women in politics in India is multifaceted and extends across various dimensions of governance, policymaking, and societal transformation. This section of the analytical study examines the influence and consequences of women's participation in Indian politics.

- **Gender-Specific Policies**: Women in politics often advocate for policies that address gender-specific issues, such as healthcare, education, and violence against women. Their presence in decision-making bodies can lead to the prioritization of these concerns.
- **Legislative Impact:**

  Enacting Pro-Women Legislation: Women legislators have played pivotal roles in the formulation and passage of legislation aimed at protecting women's rights and promoting gender equality. This includes laws addressing issues like dowry, domestic violence, and sexual harassment.
- **Local Governance and Grassroots Impact:**

  Improved Service Delivery: Women leaders in local governance often focus on improving basic services like healthcare, sanitation, and education, which can have a direct impact on the quality of life in their communities.

Promotion of Civic Engagement: Women leaders encourage civic engagement and participation, motivating more women to get involved in community decision-making processes.

❖ **Role Modeling and Aspirations:**

Inspiring Future Leaders: Women in politics serve as role models for future generations of women leaders, demonstrating that women can excel in traditionally male-dominated fields. **Encouraging Political Aspirations**: The visibility of women in political leadership positions encourages more women to enter politics and aspire to higher offices.

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS:

The participation of women in politics in India has been significantly influenced by a range of challenges and barriers, both historical and contemporary. This section of the analytical study explores these challenges and barriers, which have limited women's entry into and progress within the political arena.

❖ Patriarchal Norms and Stereotypes:

Traditional Gender Roles: Deep-rooted patriarchal norms assign women primarily domestic roles, making it difficult for them to break into the male-dominated sphere of politics.

Stereotypes: Stereotypes about women's capabilities, leadership, and decision making abilities persist, undermining their credibility as political leaders.

❖ Violence and Harassment:

Physical Threats: Women politicians often face physical threats and violence, including assault and vandalism, which can deter them from active political participation.

Verbal Abuse: Verbal harassment, character assassination, and derogatory comments are commonly used as tools to silence women in politics.

❖ **Lack of Access to Resources:**

Financial Barriers: Women often lack access to the financial resources necessary for mounting political campaigns, such as fundraising networks and campaign financing.

Educational Disparities: Gender disparities in education limit women's access to information and knowledge, affecting their ability to engage in informed political discourse.

❖ **Family and Social Pressure:**

Balancing Family and Politics: Women often find it challenging to balance family responsibilities with political careers, leading to family pressure to prioritize domestic roles.

Social Stigma: The decision to enter politics can be met with social stigma, as women who challenge traditional gender roles may face backlash from their communities.

❖ **Lack of Representation in Political Parties:**

Underrepresentation in Party Leadership: Women are often underrepresented in leadership positions within political parties, making it difficult to secure party tickets and nominations.

Limited Decision-Making Power: Women within political parties may have limited influence in shaping party policies and strategies.

❖ **Electoral Challenges**:

Electoral Violence: Elections in India can be marred by violence and intimidation, disproportionately affecting women candidates.

Winner-Takes-All System: The "winner-takes-all" electoral system can discourage women from entering politics because they may perceive it as a high-stakes, winner-centric environment.

❖ **Reservation Policies and Tokenism:**

Token Representation: Some critics argue that reservation policies can lead to tokenism, where women elected through reservations may not have real decision-making power or be taken seriously by their male counterparts.

Limited Scope: Reservation policies have primarily been implemented at the local level, leaving state and national-level politics with limited gender diversity.

❖ **Media Bias and Misrepresentation:**

Biased Reporting: The media sometimes portrays women politicians in a biased or negative manner, focusing on their appearance and personal lives rather than their policies and capabilities.

Lack of Coverage: Women politicians may receive less media coverage compared to their male counterparts, making it difficult to build public profiles.

❖ **Intersectionality and Caste-Based Discrimination**:

Caste and Class Barriers: Women from marginalized communities often face compounded discrimination due to both their gender and caste or class background, limiting their political opportunities.

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN POLITICS:

Empowering women in politics in India is a crucial endeavor that involves a multifaceted approach aimed at addressing the challenges and barriers women face in the political arena. This section of the analytical study explores strategies and initiatives to empower women in Indian politics.

❖ **Educational Empowerment:**

Promote Girls' Education: Encourage and incentivize the education of girls and women to enhance their knowledge, skills, and confidence, making them more capable and informed political participants.

❖ **Financial Support and Resources:**

Access to Funding: Facilitate access to campaign financing and financial resources for women candidates, especially those from marginalized backgrounds.

Training and Capacity Building: Provide training programs and workshops to enhance the political and leadership skills of women interested in politics.

❖ **Research and Data Collection:**

Collect Data: Gather and analyze data on women's political participation, representation, and barriers to better inform policy and program design.

Research and Studies: Conduct research and studies on the impact of women in politics, showcasing their contributions to governance and societal development.

SUCCESS STORIES:

Indira Gandhi: Indira Gandhi was the first woman to serve as the Prime Minister of India. She held this office for four terms, making her one of the most influential political figures in India's history. Her leadership during crucial moments, such as the Bangladesh Liberation War, has left a lasting impact on Indian politics.

❖ **Pratibha Patil:** Pratibha Patil served as India's first female President from 2007 to 2012. Her election to the highest constitutional office in the country was a significant milestone for women in Indian politics.

❖ **Mamata Banerjee**: Mamata Banerjee is the Chief Minister of West Bengal and the founder of the All-India Trinamool Congress (AITC). Her leadership has had a significant impact on state politics, and she is known for her grassroots activism.

❖ **Sushma Swaraj**: Sushma Swaraj was a prominent leader of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and served as India's Minister of External Affairs. She was known for her diplomatic skills and her ability to connect with people both within and outside India.

❖ **Mayawati**: Mayawati, a leader from the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), has served multiple terms as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Her advocacy for the rights of marginalized communities, particularly Dalits, has reshaped caste politics in the state.

❖· **Jayalalithaa**: J. Jayalalithaa, also known as "Amma," was a charismatic leader and actress who served multiple terms as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Her leadership was marked by a strong focus on welfare programs and infrastructure development.

❖ **Nirmala Sitharaman**: Nirmala Sitharaman is the Finance Minister of India and a prominent member of the BJP. She has played a crucial role in shaping India's economic policies and is known for her leadership in finance and commerce.

❖ **Smriti Irani:** Smriti Irani, a former television actress, is a senior BJP leader who has held significant ministerial portfolios, including Minister of Textiles and Minister of Women and Child Development. She is known for her active role in politics and governance.

❖ **Maneka Gandhi**: Maneka Gandhi, a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family, has held various ministerial positions in different governments. She is known for her work in animal welfare and environmental protection.

·❖ **Poonam Mahajan**: Poonam Mahajan is a prominent young leader of the BJP and a Member of Parliament. She has actively worked to engage youth and women in politics and has represented her constituency effectively.

❖ **Nandini Satpathy**: Nandini Satpathy was the first woman Chief Minister of Odisha. Her tenure was marked by a focus on social welfare and development programs.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the status of women in India has improved significantly in recent years, but there is still a long way to go. It is essential to recognize the achievements made so far and continue to work towards a more equitable and just society for women. By addressing the challenges that women in India face and promoting gender equality, we can ensure that women can fully participate in all aspects of life and contribute to the development of the country. the study recognizes that while significant progress has been made, there is still work to be done to ensure equal and meaningful participation of women in Indian politics. Achieving gender equality in politics is not only a matter of justice and democracy but also a means to enhance the effectiveness of governance and address the unique needs and perspectives of all citizens, regardless of gender. By addressing the challenges and building on the successes, India can move closer to a more inclusive and representative political landscape that reflects the diversity and aspirations of its people.

References:

1. Gorman, Lyn and David McLea. Media and Society into the 21st Century: A Historical Introduction. New Delhi: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 6. Iyengar, A.S. Role of Press and Indian Freedom Struggle: All through the Gandhian Era. New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation, 2001.
2. Narula, Uma. Indian Women Across Generations. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers , 2005.
3. Shukla, A. Kumar. Women in India Politics: Empowerment of Women Through Political Participation. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2000.
4. Bjorkert, S. Thapar. Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices, 1930-42. New Delhi: SAGE, 2006.
5. Status of women in india (indiatimes.com)
6. Mainwal, Sujata (2014, April). Changing status of women in modern India: A sociological study. International Journal of Engineering and Management Research, Vandana Publications, 4(2), 288-290.
7. Salawade, S. N. (2012, September 8). Status of women in ancient India: The Vedic period. Indian Streams Research Journal, 2 (8), 1-3.
8. Dilip Sinhji, KS. (2004). Kutch: in Festival and Custom. Har Anand Publications: New Delhi.
9. Menon Indu M. Status of Muslim women in India. A case study from Kerala. New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1989.

10. Nanda BR. Indian women from screen to modernity. New Delhi: Vikas Prakashan, 1976.
11. Mishra RC. Towards gender equality, 2006. Author Press. ISBN 81-7273-306-2 https: / / www.vedamsbooks.com / no43902.htm
12. Prithi Raj Kumar, Rameshwari Devi, Romila Pruthi. Status and position of women: in ancient, medieval and modern India, 2001. Vedam Granth. ISBN 81-7594- 078-6. https: / / www.vedamsbooks.com / no21831.htm
13. "Info Change Women: Background and Perspective". http: / / www.infochangeindia.org / WomenIbp.jsp. Retrieved on 2006-12-24.
14. Saravan Kumar AR. Current scenario of women education in India. In a National Seminar sponsored by ICHR on Educational Practices in the Chola Empire (850 – 1279 AD) EPIC – 2016 organized by the Department of History & DDE, Alagappa University, Karaikudi, 2016.
15. Jyotsna Kamat. The Status of Women in Medieval Karnataka, 2006. http: / / www.kamat.com / jyotsna / women.htm. Retrieved on 2006-12-24.

19

Role of Women and Women's Organisations in Women Welfare

Suchetana Dhar

Abstract

The status of women in India has been a chequered one as it has many ups and downs. Since Vedic age, through a roller coaster journey, the women in India made some progress at different fields. Over the year, some sociologists and non- sociologists have devoted time and effort to access the problems plaguing women in our society. While a few have referred to the legal rights enjoyed by women in marriage, inheritance and participation in public affairs, others have referred to the still prevalent inequality and discrimination suffered by women due to the social attitudes of males and the existing customs and traditions. Hence this study attempts to explore the gradual progress of women from ancient to till now, their active role in Indian freedom struggle, the challenges they are facing from time to time with the changing circumstances through the use of qualitative methods such as document analysis of women's constitutional, legal rights, various institutions and governmental and non-governmental organization's roles. As we moved from women protection to women empowerment, the role of NGO's changed. The paper seeks to identify all those aforementioned organisations and institutions and their major role for women empowerment. Findings from the study will reveal that the plight of women in general is still distressing and their conditions in society are deplorable, and the paper will also focus onto the measures taken for the amelioration of their lot by the Government, voluntary organizations and social groups by identifying all those women empowerment policies and programs of Indian Government like National Policies of Empowerment of Women (2001), Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao schemes and other schemes as well.

Key words: *NGO, constitutional rights, legal rights,*

Position of Women in History:

Indian society generally attached high moral for women. Prevalence of many popular Goddesses like Parvati, Saraswati, Laxmi, Durga epitomises this. In Indus Valley Civilisation aka Harappa Civilisation (2500Bc- 1500Bc) revealed that women might have enjoyed some sort of rights. Statue of dancing girl tells the women hold in the art. In Early Vedic age (1500Bc- 1000Bc) women were accorded with high respect and dignity. Rig Veda places women as central to creation of all lives in the cosmos. In education they enjoyed equality with men. Women poets like Apala, Viswavara, Ghosa, Lopamudra are eminent in this period. They had freedom to choose their life partner, dowry system was not established, and widow remarriage was permitted. Sati Pratha was absent, women had equal right on father's property, and they always used to participate in religious and political assemblies. From Later Vedic period (1000Bc- 500Bc) degradation in the situation of women started. One main reason can be identified as the formation of larger kingdoms and need for large army gave more important role and prestigue to men. On the other hand Brahmanism raised above the state where most of the religious rituals and rites deprived women. Women rights and opportunities were suppressed in all the ways and they became mere sex toy and child bearing machine. In Medieval period this despite of Bhakti and Sufi movement, the overall situation continued to be worsen because of the conservatism, orthodox, male chauvinism negative impact of Muslim rulers. A menace called "Jauhar" came into existence. Under this, wives and daughters of defeated warriors self-immolate themselves to avoid strain on their modesty.

Condition of Women during 18th Century

Despite the progressive impact of Bhakti movement, Indian women continued to be oppressed across the religion, caste from womb to tomb in following ways in 18th century. Female infanticide that is killing of female child after the birth was widely prevailed at that time particularly among upper caste Bengalis and Rajput. Child marriage puts unbearable physical pain and mental agony to girls. Education was denied to girls falsely believing that learning make them disobedient to men and lead to loss of culture. Menace of dowry evolved as the symbolic gesture and later became mandatory. Sati Pratha, where wives were forced to burn themselves after the death of their husband. Raja Rammohon Roy called it as 'Murder according

to every Shastra'. Widows were considered as inauspicious they were forced to live a secluded life not only from the society nut also from their family. Women were usually contained in house, dependent of male in economic sphere, they were denied their due share in parents and husband properties. Their religious rights, participation in politics and administration were denied. Pardah system was a dominant socio-religious practice for seclusion of women. It takes two forms like physical segregation of the sexes and the requirement that women cover their bodies so as to cover their skin and conceal their form. Women were often subject to harassment and physical torture at the hands of men in their family.

Women under British Rule

At the dawn of 19th century, renaissance and enlightment-driven socio-religious reform movement leaded by Vidyasagar, RamMahon Roy etc flowered under the British rule to voice against the suppression of women. The English regime supported new emerged educated class to liberate women from clutches of religious orthodox and male chauvinists in following ways.

1. Ending Infanticide- Infanticides are declared illegal and equivalent to murder by the Bengal Regulations of 1975 and 1980s.
2. Abolition of Sati- At the initiative of Raja Rammohon Roy, government declared that the practice of Sati illegal and punishable by criminal courts as culpable homicide in 1829. Next year it extended to other two major provinces like Madras and Bombay.
3. Widow Remarriage- At the instance of Bramho Samaj and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, government enacted Hindu Remarriage Act, 1856. Vidyasagar cited vedic texts to prove that the Hindu religion sanctioned widow remarriage. Vishnu Sashtri founded Widow Remarriage Association in 1850s. Karsondas Muljit through his Gujarati weekly paper Satya Prakash advocated widow remarriage. Professor D.K Karve worked for widow welfare in western India.
4. Annihilation of child marriage- due to the efforts of Parsi reformer B.M.Malabari, the Age of Consent Act (1891) was enacted with forbade the marriage of girls below 12 years old. The Sarda Act (1930) further pushed the marriage age to 18 and 14 for boys and girls respectively.

5. Education to Women- the Christian missionaries were the first to set up the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society in 1819. Bethune school was founded by J.E.D Bethune in 1849 as a culmination of power women education movement started in 1840s and 1850s. Wood's Despatch on education and Hunter Commission laid great stress on need for female education. In Maharashtra also reformists actively promoted girls' schools. Professor D.K Karve started Indian Women University at Bombay in 1916. Lady Hardinge Medical College was opened in Delhi in1916.

Role of Women in Indian Freedom Struggle

With the help of Bhakti movement and socio-religious reform movements, Indian women slowly regained their lost freedom and basic Human Rights by the end of 19th and early 20th century. This transition allowed women to stand shoulder to shoulder with men in the fight against British. During national struggle, Indian women showed their patriotism, nationalism, leadership, service mind, sacrifice, attitude and vigour and velour in the following ways:

1. Jhansi Rani and Begum Hazratmahal provided inspiring leadership for 1857 Revolt
2. Kadambari Ganguly, the first woman graduate of the British Empire, went to attend the first meeting of Indian National Congress meeting as a delegate.
3. During Swadeshi Movement, people like Urmila Devi, Durgabai Deshmukh, S. Ambujammal and Basanti Devi educated and empowered people to boycott English goods and use Indian goods. Common women crushed their glass bangles, observed not cooking program.
4. Bhikaji Rustom Cama co-founded the Paris Indian society. In 1907, attended the second Socialist Congress in Germany, where she described the devastating effects of a famine that had struck the Indian subcontinent. In her appeal for human rights, equality and for autonomy from Great Britain, she unfurled what she called the 'Flag of Indian Independence.'
5. Annie Besant started Home Rule Movement to get some sort of self- rule for India.
6. Women like Vijayalaxmi Pandit, Muthulakshmi Reddy and Aruna Asaf Ali are some the women freedom fighters who participated in the non-violent movement of non-cooperation and civil disobedience.

7. Sarala Devi Chaudhurani participated in revolutionary movement. She provided shelter and acted as courier to revolutionaries.
8. Kasturba Gandhi, Kamala Nehru and Sister Nivedita popularised the idea of non-violence, truth and Satyagraha.
9. Aruna Ashraf Ali and Usha Mehta facilitated Quit India Movement by means of running underground radio.
10. Lakshmi Sahgal heated the Jhansi unit of Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army.
11. Sarojini Naidu (the Nightingale of India), Sucheta Kripalini and Annie Besant headed the Indian National Congress.

Women's Constitutional and Legal Rights

In the light of historical experiences and in consonance with the democratic ideals, our founding fathers incorporated various provisions for gender equality across the constitution. Those are:-

Constitutional Privileges in the Preamble

It assures Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic ideals to all its citizens without any gender bias. It also offers Equality of status and of opportunities for all its citizens including women.

Fundamental rights

1. Where Equality before law for women is guaranteed in Article 14.
2. The state to make any special provision in favour of women and children in Article 15(3)

Directive principle of State Policy

3. the state to direct its policy towards securing:

   Men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood Article 39(a).

   Equal pay for equal work for both men and women, Article 39(d).
4. To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities. (Article 39A)

5. The state to make provision for securing just and human conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42).
6. Early childhood care and education to children below the age of 6 years in Article 45 (after 86 Amendment Act).
7. The state to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker section of the people and to protect them from social justice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)

Fundamental Duties

8. To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongest all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51A[e]).

Political Rights

9. Voting rights are denied to women in pre-independent India but Indian constitution strictly prohibited gender bias in voting by offering Universal adult franchise under Article 326.
10. Under Article 243 D, one-third seats in the Panchayats including offices of chairpersons reserved for women.
11. Under Article 243 T, one-third seats in the municipality including offices of chairpersons reserved for women.

Having discussed above all the various provisions enshrined, now we have to look at the status of women in India today. This paper tries to find the answer of the critical question like how do we analysis the change in their status? Even after all those aforementioned provisions and constitutional legal guarantees and feminist movements to make women more conscious about their rights and empowering them, can we, the women still consider ourselves as the "Half Sky"?

It may be maintained that the status of women in India has changed a lot from early 1950's onwards. Both structural and cultural changes have not only provided equality of opportunities to women in education, employment and political participation, but have also reduced the exploitation of women, and oriented women to develop their own organisations which take keen interest in their problems. Besides the need for linkages among research, national policy and programmes oriented to women has come to be increasingly realised. Several commissions have been appointed by the Central and the State Governments to study the cause of low status of women and to protect

their rights in various fields. The National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up on January 31, 1992 to look into women-related issues, to prove into the status of women, to study various legislations and point out loopholes and gaps and to looks into the causes of discrimination and violence against women and analysis possible remedies.

Legislative Safeguards

In order to neutralize the cumulative disadvantage arising out of socioeconomic, education and political factors the Constitution of India empowers the state to adopt suitable measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. It also provided measures to treat women equally. Accordingly, the following are the interventionist strategies adopted by Government of India.

1. Dowry prohibition Act, 1961 It prescribes penalty for giving or taking dowry does not apply to presents which are given at the time of a marriage to the bride or bridegroom.
2. Immoral Traffic (Prevention) act 1956 the act intends to combat trafficking and sexual exploitation for commercial purposes.
3. Commission of Sati Prevention Act, 1986 an attempt to commit Sati or to abet such an attempt is punishable with imprisonment or imposition of a fine.
4. Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 indecent representation of women through advertisement and various publications, paintings, writings, figures or in any other manner is completely prohibited through this act.
5. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 they not only cover physical violence against women but also consider other forms of violence, such as emotional, verbal, sexual and economic abuse. One of the most important features of the act is the women's right to stay in her husband's home.
6. Sexual Harassment of Women at workplace Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act, 2013 it, among the other, demands that any workplace with more than 10 employees needs to create a mechanism for redressal of complaints against sexual harassment.
7. Other legislative works that aimed to safeguard women rights are Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Hindu Succession Act, 1956,

The Equal Remuneration act, 1976 and The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976.

But even after having so many legal safeguards, we have not reached to the enough to be in the good situation. Indian women today is still not economically emancipated from man. In social, psychological and moral dimensions also her situation is not identical with that of man. The way she carries on her job, profession and domestic work and her devotion to all these depends on the contact supplied by the total pattern of her life. When she begins her adult life, she does not have behind her the same past as has a man. She is evaluated by the society with the different perspective. A large majority of women fail to achieve the liberation, since they do not escape from the traditional feminine world. They get neither from society not from their husbands the assistance needed to become in concrete fact that equals of men. No wonder, they are still the victims of male victimisers.

From more critical findings we can put that the denial of right to women may be related to individual economic and demographic factors. The individual factors refer to the personality characteristics of these males, who possess low intellectual ability (IQ); who suffers from a immaturity, depression and frustrations; who are alcoholic; or who have unrealistic high expectations from women expect them to remain docile and passive. As regards the economic factors, the non-earning women are denied rights more than the earning women; the low and middle income families deny rights to women more than the upper income families; and among the earning women, those engaged in nonprofessional or low-status jobs enjoy fewer rights than those engaged in professions or high-status jobs. Lastly, as regards the demographic factors, women in the upper casts are denied less rights than women in the intermediate or the lower castes; the older males deny rights to women more than the younger males; and rights denied by women to women are more than the rights denied by men to women.

We may also identify six types of denial of rights, money oriented, pleasure oriented, power oriented, victim participated, the denier's pathology resulted and stressful family situations resulted.

We have already discussed so far that how the constitution of India, law and several Governments took lots of legal actions, gave constitutional guarantee for the emancipation of women. But now we

will focus on another domain of the society that is role of Organisations. To address these deep rooted problems among the women community and to work on it for their progress in the society lots of women organisations came forward since long time and put a lot of effort in women emancipation. From the Satyashodhak Samaj, founded by Jyotiba Phule to National Council of Women in India (1925), the history of women organisations has a long and deep impact for women progress.

Though women uplift movement in the pre-independence India was led by male, during the post-independence era the baton was passed to woman itself. Many women provided inspiring leadership and wider base for the women rights movement. For instance, we can found appreciable number of women participation in Sharecropper's Movement in Telangana in late 1940s, anti-alcohol Movement in Uttarakhand in 1960s and Chipko Movement in 1970s. However, the women movement was divided as now they do not have British. Rather, it divided on religious, religion, political and cast lines.

The women rights movement took up upswing in 1980s is culminated in Shah Bano case which upheld the basic human rights of Muslim women defying orthodox Islam bodies. Rights group like Forum against Rape, Stree Sangharsh and Samata active took up the issue of rape during this period. Also,

1. Self-employment Women's Association (SEWA) - it was the first women's trade union and it was formed in 1972, focused on improving the condition of women working in the unorganised sector.
2. All India Democratic Women Association (AIDWA) - founded in 1981 as a pan-India women organisation, it committed to achieving democracy, equality and women's emancipation.
3. Indian Association of Women's Studies - established in 1981 as an Institution of Women academics and activists, it involved in research and teaching. It actively published books and journals on feminist subjects.
4. Breakthrough Trust - is working to make violence and discrimination against women and girls and acceptable. This trust engages in various multimedia campaigns and mobilizes community in favour of women. It also takes actions and ensures dignity, justice and equality for all.

5. Guria Swayam Sevi Sansthan – It is working to free women and children from sexual exploitation, forced prostitution and trafficking and restoration of the rights of their children at Varanasi and UP.
6. Jagori - The Delhi-Based NGO is working on tackling sexual harassment. It is working from the last 25 years with the vision of a 'just society'. It has started 'Safe Delhi' campaign to fight the problem of sexual harassment.
7. Rangsutra - A social enterprise that seeks to bring socioeconomic development and inclusive growth in rural India with emphasis on women.
8. Maher - It provides shelter and rehabilitation to destitute women.
9. Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (institution) - TIFAC has been instrumental in generating employment for women through knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing-Kiran-IPR scheme.
10. OYSS Women - founded by women's rights activist Manasi Pradhan in 1987, this NGO is engaged in empowering women in India.

International NGOs

There are international NGOs working for gender equality and empowerment of women like,

1. UN Women- Formerly known as United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and empowerment. It assists inter-governmental bodied to frame global standards and facilitate member states to implement the same. It also brings global cooperation and coordination in women upliftment.
2. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)- provides humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries.
3. The International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAW) – organised in 1985 to promote recognition of women's human rights under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination

of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), an international human rights treaty.

Governmental Organisations

1. Ministry of Women and Child Development - Apex body for the women development and empowerment.
2. National Commission for Women - It was set up as statutory authority by parliament in 1992. It reviews constitutional and statutory safeguards of women and recommend improving the same to government.
3. National Commission for protection of Child Rights - The statutory body was established in 2007 with the mandate to ensure that all laws, policies, programs and administrative mechanisms are in consonants with the child rights perspective as inside in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The child is defined as a person in the 0 to 18 years age group.
4. Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) - It was established in 1953 with the objective of promoting social welfare activities and implementing welfare programs for women, children and the handicapped through voluntary organisations.
5. Rashtriya Mahila kosh (RMK) - It was established as an autonomous body under women ministry in 1993. It provides credit to NGOs for women development.

As we move from women protection to woman empowerment the role of NGOs changed. After looking at the functions and roles of the aforementioned organisations and analysing these thoroughly it can be finally said women organisations are primary functioning as emancipator of women from the suppression and oppression of orthodox classes and self-prescribed religious fatwas. It sets women free from outdated, regressive social practices and customs. These organisations educate women about their legal rights and constitutional privileges, thereby it melts away the ignorance of women and make right oriented citizen, and thereby women avoid the harassment and atrocities in the society and leads a dignified life. If at all that happens they are empowered to deal with. Also they mobilize people at grass root level by articulating problems of the women thereby NGOs highlight the serious nature of the problem to the government and media. Such a mobilisation also provides immense

scope for exchange of progressive feminist ideas. Women NGOs act as guardian of women life, custodian of women rights and guarantor of women freedom. In case of deprivation of their rights, NGOs try to restore them by organising demonstrations, or by approaching the court or by highlighting the issue by covering using the power of media. Women organisations are at the forefront of social transformation by giving adequate space for liberal thoughts, progressive ideas, modern values and practices. Thereby it inculcates culture of tolerance and assimilation. It gives special emphasize on women belonging to the weaker section of the society like the Dalits and Tribes. They address their socioeconomic concerns with long term vision. They provide them utmost care in terms of health, education and housing to integrate them into mainstream development of nation. Nowadays women NGOs are evolving as separate pressure groups due to their large social base. Thereby it ensures that government policies and programs are relevant, need oriented and gender equitable.

Still there are lots of limitations of these organisations that we need to take into importance and discuss. Most of the women NGOs are not properly structured and systematically managed. They are functioning as isolated units, lacking coordination and cooperation at pan- India level. They lack in capacity building which in turn cost the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. Secondly, financial constraints is one of the major stumbling blocks for women organisation. They mainly depend on donations and do not have their own revenue generation. Government aid for them is too meagre. Ultimately it results in poor and inadequate infrastructure facilities. Thirdly, despite its popular cause and aim to empower half of Indian population, its membership is less and is primarily numbered by victims and their relatives as it lacks large-scale participation of women. Despite the fact that historically men act as torch-bearer for women empowerment, men membership is least encouraged. Also in recent years, corruption and maladministration are widely prevalent amongst few women NGOs. The revered institution is used for money laundering and legalising illegal wealth. Fourthly, it mainly focuses on urban and peripheral areas leaving large rural areas where 60% of Indian population lives. The subject of women empowerment became a matter to gain respect and glamour for rich and educated upper class. They never address the route of women problems instead opted for ad hoc solution to get media coverage. The term gender equality

is misunderstood today by women NGOs. They try to do everything that men do, despite their biological and cultural constraints. Instead of solving the existing problems, they are creating ground for new conflicts. Women NGOs lack consistency in their functioning. Once the particular issue is over, they become dormant. It also fails to follow up the issue up to the last. Finally, women organisations are focusing more on curative aspects, having less focus on preventive aspects. That is less emphasis on education and empowerment more on sympathizing victims.

Because of these limitations the problems of women is changed from time to time in various stages with the changing circumstances. Even in the 21st century India faces the problems regarding women community. In the last segment of this article let's have a quick look into the analysis of still prevalent important issues.

1. Female infanticide: Though female infanticide is sharply reduced, it continues to be prevalent in different forms of different reasons. Male child quest-driven sex selection is common now. The problem is more among educated urban and rich people.
2. Worst child sex ratio: As per the 2011 Census, the child sex ratio (0-6 years) has shown a decline from 927 females per thousand males in 2001 to 919 females per thousand males in 2011. Small family desire, dowry burden, and son preference are behind this.
3. Low sex ratio: India has 940 females part 1000 of males as per 2011 Census. Though the trend is moving in good direction when compared to 2001 Census (933), there is huge gap in gender equality.
4. Child abuse: Creating strain on our morale fabric children, particularly female child, and now abused that too by relatives and parents. These not only create physical pain but also mental agony unsuitable to the age.
5. Inferior treatment: Women are given inferior treatment from womb to tomb. They are seen as a liability in the material world. They are not properly educated rather employed as child labour. Their health is not properly taken care. Their emotion, feeling and happiness are often neglected.

6. Problem of dowry: Still millions of women get late married or married not at all because of the menace of dowry. It creates lot of emotional tensions in the family and society at large.
7. Domestic violence: Though status of woman in their husband's home is improved a lot, still women are facing domestic violence for dowry or love marriage or inter-caste marriage reason.
8. Harassment at workplace: With more women engaged in job outside home, they are subject to harassment at workplace by their superiors and peers. Women reeling under economic constraints even do not have opportunity to disclose their problems.
9. Safety: The safety and security of Indian women in public place is pathetic. Molestation, rape, eve teasing are everyday phenomena at present. India's rich tradition is facing backlash at world stage because of this.
10. Trafficking: The trafficking of girl child and women are ever increasing. The problem is such an act is done by organised crime syndicate with well-developed and connected network. Trafficked women are used for flash trading and criminal activities.
11. Low literacy: Even after six decades of independence, the literacy rate of women is just over 65% as against men's 82 plus. This clearly shows that women education is less important for Indian society.
12. Non-valuing housewife job: Despite the hectic and restless work done by our women in kitchen and home from early morning to late night, their contribution is not appreciated. Because neither it is monetarily valued not publicly rewarded.

So after the overall analysis of the status of Indian women from ancient to present times, their problems, the role of organisations for their emancipation and the limitations leading to the still prevalent social diseases that women are still suffering from, I will conclude my article by mentioning some way forward by pointing the Law Commission's urge to the legislature that, "First consider equality within communities' between men and women rather than equality between communities."

Now, compulsory registration of marriage, a uniform age of consent for marriage, irretrievable breakdown of marriage as a ground for divorce, disabled friendly laws, colonial inheritance of restitution of conjugal rights should be abolished, bigamy upon conversation, welfare of illegitimate children, adoption law under the Juvenile justice (care and protection of children) act, 2015, adoption of female child by male adult should be allowed, succession must be based on proximity to the deceased, deletion of third-day notice period under the special marriage act, 1954- these recommendations can make the society better for the survival of women. But still, more ways to go.

References

1. The Education Commision, 1964-66
2. Mudaliar Commision, 1952-53
3. Law commission of India- Uniform Civil Code (Notice no- 14 / 6 / 2023-28 / 7 / 2023)
4. Kondal Suneeta, *Incredible women of India's Freedom Struggle*, Pentagon Press (Delhi,2024)
5. Yadav Sanjay, *Women Freedom Fighters of India*, Ankit Publications, 2019
6. Mody Nawaj, *Women in India's Freedom Struggle*, Allied Publishers (India-2000)
7. Z Rashid, *Role of women in Indian Freedom Movement*, International Journal of emerging Knowledge Studies, 2023
8. Vijayalaxmi Hedge, *Role of NGOs in Women Empowerment*, Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012
9. Banerjee Smita, Saksena Shalini, Ailawadi Neeru, *The Working Women: Indian Perspectives on Stereotypes, Marginalisation and Empowerment,* Bloomsburry India, 2020
10. UN Women, a Decade of Daring, WWW.unwomen.org , 2021

20

Status and Condition of Women in Ancient, Medieval and Modern India

Tanika Das

Abstract

God created both men and women since the starting of civilization .both men and women together carry forward the civilization .But the real fact is women's status and position varies in different period of history .In ancient Vedic period women were treat as equal to men but in later Vedic period women were treated like an animal . In different period woman's condition became different. All over the world 50% of total population is constituted by women .But in India there is decreasing ratio .India is a patriarchal society. Here men are physically stronger, more capable to do hard work. Men control access to power; property and resources .and women are often expected to leave their natural homes and to join their in laws. From the ancient time to modern period girls did not get their proper right .The position of women in different period of India is discussed in this paper and the challenges which faced by women in modern India is also mentioned here.

Keywords: *civilization, patriarchal, physically, resources, contribution*

Introduction: God created both men and women. since the starting of civilization both men and women together carry forward society but the real fact is that from the ancient period it is found that women throughout history were denied their right .sometimes they were treated as being a little more than animal . If we see the number of men of women then it is observed that globally in 2021 the female share of the global population was just under 50% males in the world population. In our country there is decreasing ratio of women on the basis of sex selection abortion and this is the main reason of unequal sex ratio of male to female. India is a country where the citizen

worships the country as the Mother India. Abnindranath Tagore portrayed 'Bharatmata' as a four armed Hindu Goddess wearing saffron coloured robes, holding the manuscripts, sheaves of rice, a mala and a white cloth .The image of Bharatmata was an icon to create nationalist feeling in Indians during the freedom struggle. A country which is recognised as 'Mother India' there women still suffers for their right and proper status.

Objective:

(1) Study the condition of women in different period of India.

(2) Purpose of this paper is to acquire knowledge about the famous women of different period and their contribution.

(3) The issues faced by women in modern India.

Women's position in Hindu Dhamma:

One of the most profound attributes of Hinduism is the recognition and worship of God as feminine. Hinduism is the only major religion in which God is worshipped as female form and continues to do so today. In Hindu dhammashakti is worshipped. It is thought that Goddess is the centre of all power. Festivals such as Navaratri, Dusshera, Vasant panchami are totally dedicated to Goddess .There are four main deity traditions like Ganapatya, Vaishnava, Shiva, and Shakta. Among these the Feminine divine plays a central role .Among four the Shakta tradition exclusively worships the feminine divine in the form of Shakti or divine Mother. Goddess is responsible for the wellbeing of the universe and she is considered the embodiment of incredible power.

The Hindu Epic such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana idealize women embodied by depiction of Draupadi the wife of five pandavas in Mahabharata and Sita the wife of prince Rama in Ramayana. There are also many puranic texts which elucidate the stories and symbols of solely the feminine divine.

Women's position in vedic period:

In the Vedic period (1500 -1000) bc women were generally held in high regard and had a respected status in society. In these period women enjoyed equal status with men and their position was also equal. Women received an education, attended school and debates. Women were permitted to participate in religious rites. Many of them

composed hymns which enriched the Vedic literature. Women of this period enjoyed absolutely economic freedom. Even that time women were free to choose their husband through the system of 'swyamvara'.

Women were given high ranking position .It is said that mature girls used to attend numerous festivals and public gathering to meet with potential husband and their mothers also let them do so. In this period marriage were never forcibly imposed on women and there was no concept of child marriage.

There were some famous women in this period who became very popular for their wisdom.

1. **vachaknavi :** *Gargi* VaChaknavi is honoured as a great natural philosopher and renowned expounder of the vedas . And known as Brahmavadini ; a person with knowledge of Brahma vidya .From the young age she had keen interest in vedic scripture and became very proficient in the field of philosophy.
2. **Maitreyi: Maitreyi** is another famous woman in vedic period. She is mentioned in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad as one of the two wives of the vedic sage yajnavalkya. In ancient Sanskrit literature she is known as a Brahmavadini . she is considered a symbol of Indian intellectual women . in the Rig Veda about ten hymns are 'attributed to Maitreyi . She gave the Hindu concept of Atman (soul or self) in a dialogue contained in the Brihadaranyka Upanishad. This dialogue appears in several Hindu texts.
3. **Lopamudra :** Lopamudra is another very famous women in Vedic period and she is known for her contribution to the Rig Veda. Many hymns in the Rig-Veda are attributed to Lopamudra. She is also known as Kaushitaki and varaprada.There were also famous women like Apala, Ushas, visvavara, Gautami, Hemalekha who were educated and famous for their contribution.

   So it shows that in Vedic period women's position were high and and they allowed in education.

Women' Position in Later Vedic Period:

The position of women detorieted in later vedic period, because society became more patriarchal. Women were not allowed to read vedic literature. Women are confined to their homes and were not permitted to participate in public gathering.

In this period women were married at a young age and child marriage was common. Widow marriage was prohibited. In this period women's condition was very poor, even they were not allowed to vote.

Status of women in the medieval India:

The medieval period starts with the entry of muslim invaders in India. This time of this era which was lasted from 500 to 1500 AD? This time was extremely discouraging for Indian women as there position continued to detoried during this time. In the Indian history this medieval age is considered as 'dark age' for the women. In this time many foreign rulers attacked and which results the decline in women status. Whenever foreign warriors such as Muslims attacked India, they brought with them their very own culture and their own way of life. They believed that women were their own property and had no independent will. The birth of the girl children was not appreciated. In some communities there were prevalence of the practices of female foeticide and female practice of killing the girl children inside the mother's womb before their birth. There was female infanticide also. The practice of female infanticide is killing the girl children after they were born. This damned practiced indicated that the birth of the girl children were not appreciated. In this period various types of injustice including child marriage, Sati, Jauhar and restrictions on the education introduced.

A) **Child Marriage : -** Child marriage is the marriage which take place when both girls and boys are below 18 years age. In the medieval period it was introduced. For this practice led to a number of issues including a high birth rate, poor health for women and high death rates for both men and children.

B) **Purdah System : -** Another issue was Purdah system. Women were encouraged to remain in purdah (veil). They were supposed to keep their face covered. Due to the prevalence of purdah system they were not allowed to move freely. The purdah system signifies the seclusion of women from the public observation by he use of clothing as well as through the high walled enclosure, curtains with homes.

C) **Sati : -** Sati was the Hindu practice of burning the widows alive on the funeral pyre of their husbands. This practice indicates the sign of being a dutiful wife. Between 1815 to 1818 there were a huge number of incidents of Sati in Bengal.

Even it was believed that women were meant to assists and supports their husband after death as well. So it was one of the major problem and one of the impediments within the course of progress of women.

D) Jauhar : - Jauhar was also the Hindu practice. In Rajput social hierchies Jauhar was typically practiced. Under this tradition women with their children set themselves on fire and commit suicide. This practice was observed in the North West region of India. When the people of the Rajput's became certain that they were going to die because of their enemy, all of the women of the Rajput's would start a large fire and set themselves ablaze while their husbands still engage in the final decisive battle.

E) Restriction on the education : - The girls were not allowed to attend schools and acquiring education, the reason behind that was if they will allow in schools they will not be able to acquire training in terms of implementation of various types of household responsibilities.

Through this restriction there were some famous women: -

1) Rani Lakshmi Bai: -

Lakshmi Bai Newalkar, the Rani of Jhansi is widely known as Rani Lakshmi Bai. She was the Maharani consort of the princely state of Jhansi in the Maratha Empire from 1843 to 1853. She was one of the leading figures in the Indian Rebellion of 1857, who became very famous and symbol of resistance to the British rule.

2) Razia Sultana : -

Razia Sultana was one of the famous women in medieval period. She was the first female muslim ruler of the Indian Subcontinent and was only female muslim ruler of Delhi.

3) jijabai:

jijabai was one ofthe famous women inmedieval period.she was known for her virtue,bravery and forsight.she was a skilled horse rider and sword fighter. she was also known as Rajmata Jijabai. As a queen she tried to managed her husband's jaigir in poona .she played a key role in establishing Shivaji as king and urged him to unify the Marathas.

4) Nurjahan:

Nurjsahan was very famous women in this period . she was wife of Mughal Emperor Jahangir. She was very powerful consort and politician. She owned ships was involved in the Indigo trade.

womens position in modern India:

The status of women in India has been subject to many changes over the time .Now women participate in all social factor like politics, sports, buisness,science,technology etc. in 2024 the female lirteracy rate in India is 65.46%. The female literecy rate has been increasing steadily over the years.In modern period women are more involved in decision making at home and inthe workplace also.

Economic Empowerment :

Now women understood veryclearly that if they want to get same status like men then women have to be economically independent.Now women are starting their own buisness .They work in all the social sector.

Women in politics:

the constitution of India establishes a parliamentary system of government and gurantees its citizens the right to be elected,freedomofspeech, freedom of assemble and form association .now women participatein politics as they can speak about their right. Indias parliament introduce the womens reservations bill (108th amendment)by this amendment 33% seats of loksabha and vidnhan sabha isreservedfor women.the bill has yet to be passed by loksabha and signed into law.so participation in politics of women gradually increased. after the establishmentof womens reservation political participation of women went from 4-5% to 25-40% and many women became leaders in local government. in India women represented 13.9% of rajyasabha seats and 15.2% of loksabha seats as of September 2023.India has seen several female leaders outperformmen in the competition to manage and control the highest government position,starting with former prime minister Indira Gandhi,and continuing with current president Droupadi Murmu.Sonia Gandhi,Mamta Banerjee , Smriti Irani ,Sushms Swaraj are also great example of womens participations in Indian politics.

challenges faced by womenin India:

Women have traditionally fought for their rights and status in society. They have repeatedly pushed for equality so that they can live lives as their own way. In modern India women are still facing many issues like

1. Gender Discrimination: from the ancient period till now women face unequal treatment in education, healthcare and in all social factors.
2. Misgomy: sometimes political parties are unfavourable to female candidates.As the party wants to win, the party does not belief on the potential of women candidates.
3. workplace issue: in India women face issue such as gender bias, uneyual pay , sexual harrasment etc.
4. Education: women's education percentage is low in the rural areas Because in the village parents does not want to educate their girls as they think to give education to girls is like wasting of money.
5. Family issues: sometimes family does not support women in their independent activites. Womenface issues like child marriage, low status, mentall harrasment etc.
5. Sexual Harassment: it is the form of sexual exploitation of a women at home, public places, transport, offices etc. by family members, friends or relatives.
6. Gender inequality: in present day also parents wish for a baby boy rather than a girl. Since in their so called 'mentality '.Boys will carry on with their generation even though it is against the law, they continue to try to determines a baby's gender. Parents will carry the pregnancy to term if they find a male, but they will abbort if they find a girl.

The laws for the protection of women in India:

1. Right against Dowry: the dowry prohibition act 1961 prohibits the dowry system, i.e. both the giving and taking of dowry.
2. The protection of women from domestic violence act 2005: this act protects women who are oppressed by domestic violence.
3. Sexual Harassment of women at workplace (prevention, prohibition and redressal) act 2013: it deals with sexual

harassment of women at the workplace. It provides a legal basis that will help curb any such harassment and protects women and create a safe atmosphere.

4. The equal remuneration act 1976: this act provide for gender non discriminatory and equality based legislation that mandates that men and women both should be paid equal for the same job.
5. The maternity benefit act (1961): It is very difficult to continue the job during pregnancy period. This act mandates for a minimum of 12 weeks of maternity leave to mothers. In 2017 amendment this was increased to a maximum of 26 weeks.
6. Pre conception and pre Natal diagnostic technique act 1994: this act passed by the parliament of India enacted to stop the decreasing sex ratio in India.

Conclusion: In India women's status and position is different in different era. In some era women get enough respect and they proved their merit. But in some era it is seen that women had to stay behind the curtain and they had no right to establish their own view. In patriarchal society women always oppressed by men. But now a days In India women's condition has improved .in modern India women proved them that they are equal with men in education ,sports, politics, science ,technology and others sector .but the fact s that the boys never have to fight for their own right . Where boys and girls are two gender and nature made them equally. This situation arises as because of our patriarchal society. From the birth a baby girl get cooking material, doll as a plaything where a baby boy get bat or ball .parents made this discrimination from the childhood. This thinking should be stopped .Equality will be established only if this disparity can be removed.

References :

1. Status of women in India(n.d). Retrieved January 01.2019 from http / / shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in / bitstream / 10603 / 8102 / 9 / 09-chapter%202.pdf
2. Altekar, A.S.(2014). The position of women in Hindu civilizatin. Motilal Banarasidas publishers, ISBN –10:8120803256
3. Status of women in the Medieval India (2020). Retrieved January 06, 2021 from triumphias.com

4. Purdah.Islamic Custom. (2020). Retrieved January 06, 2021 from Britannica.com

5. Mishra, Sham.Kartik(2012) Women Status and empowerment in India, New Delhi p.p14

6. Rout, M.(2016). Role of women in Ancient India, odhisa Review. Retrieved January 05, 2019 from http: / / magazine.odhisa.gov.in / orissareview / 2016 / jan / engpdf / 43-48pdf.

7. Mishra R.C. (2006). Towards Gender Equality. Authors press. ISBN 81-7273-306-2

8. Jauhar Indian Rite (2020). Retrieved January 06, 2021 from Britannica.com

9. Murthy H.V, sreenivasa (2006). History of India part-I Lucknow : Eastern Book company

10 Jayapalan (2001). Indian Society and Social Institutions. Atlantic publishers, ISBN 978-81-7156-925-o,p.145

21

The Challenges of Gender inequality to Women Empowerment in India

Amitava Banik

Abstract

Feminist theories have influenced the study of global politics in a number of ways (True 2009). So-called 'empirical' feminists have challenged the 'sexist' exclusion of women and women's issues from conventional analysis. Women in India have been victims of exploitation and deprivation in all societies in all ages. It is found from global experience that mere enfranchisement of women is no guarantee for women empowerment. In many countries women have been given the right to vote, and in India today, women enjoy the constitutional right to have special reservation for representation on the elected councils of local government. Rabindranath Tagore, in his essay "Samaj" has said that the feminist movement is a result of inequality of men and women in the society. He also pointed out to the ignorance of Indian society to issues of women's education, health, hygiene and overall empowerment. The economist and nobel laureate Amartya Sen, has written, "The afflicted world in which we live is characterized by deeply unequal sharing of the burden of adversities between women and men. To have an adequate appreciation of the far-reaching effects of disparities between women and men, we have to recognize the basic fact that gender inequality is not one affliction, but many, with varying reach on the lives of women and men, and of girls and boys."

This paper intends to study the inequalities among men and women from various socio-economic perspectives and analyse its effects on the issues of social, economic and political empowerment of women in India.

Keywords: *Women, empowerment, Samaj*

Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore in his essay, "Samaj" has written that the women can be considered as the centripetal force of the society. The feminist movement is a result of inequality of men and women. He also pointed out to the issues of child marriage in the Indian society. The child widow was supposed to be a spinster for whole of her life which is a great social stigma. He also pointed out to the ignorance of Indian society to issues of women's education, health, hygiene and overall empowerment. Due to these factors, there is immense inequality between men and women in the society. Rabindranath in the same essay pointed out to the argument of Chandranath Basu, a noted Sanskrit scholar who claimed that the Hindu society has placed women very highly in the social ladder and is treated like god but Rabindranath has pointed out the contrary verses in Manu Samhita that greatly diminishes the esteem of women in Hindu society. Even the discussion on women issues between the great Bhisma and Yudhisthira in the Mahabharata does not support the equality of men and women.

The part of Mahabharata where Draupadi was put on a bet by Yudhisthira pointed out to the issue of commoditisation and moral depreciation of women in society. Although some notions point out to the fact that Yudhisthira himself was put on bet before Draupadi, for which the counter agreement is that one may not respect oneself but cannot show disrespect for someone who is honourable in society. The Chandranath Basu's claim that the institution of marriage leading to unification of men and women was refuted by Rabindranath on the ground that if it was so, then how can polygamy be practised in Hindu society? Rabindranath quoted Akshay Chandra Sarkar, who said, that Hindu society is not based on equalization. This is evident from practices like – polygamy, child marriage, practice of sati, prohibition of widow remarriage and such other customs vivifying the Hindu society from very early days to almost the present days. Rabindranath also pointed out that the fertility of women had been a primary concern of the Hindu society, not the spiritual or ideological development. While remarriage of women is prohibited , remarriage and multiple marriage of men had been a common practice in Hindu society. The promotion and encouragement of women prostitution in society also points to great inequality and sexual division in society. The early fertility in women has been attributed to early marriage or child marriage of women in India. The other factor highlighted in the

society is that of women staying behind the curtains. The inequality in education and healthcare for women is also a major societal problem.

Women in India have been victims of exploitation and deprivation in all societies in all ages. It is found from global experience that mere enfranchisement of women is no guarantee for women empowerment. In many countries women have been given the right to vote, and in India today, women enjoy the constitutional right to have special reservation for representation on the elected councils of local government. The buzz word of 'empowerment' means legal-constitutional capacity to influence decision – making and exercise of power. The 73rd and 74th constitution Amendments (1992) with their provision for one-third seats reservation for women in rural and urban local bodies, have enabled women to participate in and contribute to effective governance at the local level.

The gender is defined as "a social and cultural distinction between males and females, usually based on stereotypes of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. The role of women, as, for instance, diplomats' wives, domestic workers, sex workers and suchlike, is therefore ignored, as are the often international and even global processes through which women are subordinated and exploited. 'Analytical' feminists, such as J. Ann Tickner have exposed the extent to which the theoretical framework of global politics is based on gender biases that pervade its key theories and concepts, drawing at times on the ideas of constructivism and poststructuralism.

Feminism and women's rights

Feminism can broadly be defined as a movement for the social advancement of women. As such, feminist theory is based on two central beliefs: that women are disadvantaged because of their sex; and that this disadvantage can and should be overthrown.

Two broad distinctions are nevertheless helpful. The first of these is between the feminism's first wave and its second wave. So-called first-wave feminism emerged in the nineteenth century and was shaped above all by the campaign for female suffrage, the right to vote. Its core belief was that women should enjoy the same legal and political rights as men, with a particular emphasis being placed on female suffrage on the grounds that if women could vote, all other forms of other forms of sexual discrimination or prejudice would quickly disappear. Second-wave feminism was born out of a

recognition that the achievement of political and legal rights had not solved the 'woman problem'. The goal of second-wave feminism was not merely political emancipation but women's liberation, reflected in the ideas of the growing women's liberation movement, one of the leading so-called 'new' social movements that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Since the 1970s, however, feminism has undergone a process of deradicalization, defying (repeated) attempts to define a clear feminist 'third wave', but it has also become increasingly diverse. In the UN's ranking of countries on the basis of the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), developed countries consistently outperform developing ones. In short, gender equality marches hand in hand with modernity.

Some 70 per cent of the world's poor are women. Sen (1990) sought to highlight the degree to which female poverty is disregarded by pointing out that 'more than 100 million women are missing'. The 'missing women' he referred to are evident in population statistics that show that men outnumber women in parts of the world like South Asia and Africa, despite the fact that the normal tendency would be for women to slightly outnumber men (although, at birth, boys outnumber girls everywhere in the world, women tend to outnumber men in adult society because of their greater life expectancy). By some estimates, 50 million women are 'missing' in India alone. Such trends therefore reveal higher death rates among women and girls compared with men and boys in certain parts of the world. Part of the explanation for this is the preference of some parents, motivated by economic and / or cultural considerations, to have boy children over girls, leading to the practice of sex-selective abortion or infanticide. This occurs in parts of East Asia and South Asia, and it is especially evident in China, linked to its 'one child' policy, and in some Indian states. In other cases, higher rates of disease and mortality amongst women and girls result from a failure to give them the same level of medical care, food and social services as boys and men, a misallocation that is generally worse in rural areas and particularly severe for late-born girls, and even worse for girls with elder sisters. Families with scarce resources may choose to care for boys over girls because of the expectation they will grow up to be wage earners or family workers, whereas girls are less likely to earn an income and the dowry system may impose a significant burden on individual households. On the other hand, postcolonial feminists in particular have criticized the image of women in the developing world as victims – poor, under-educated,

oppressed and disempowered. Women, they argue, often play a leading role in development and poverty reduction initiatives, especially when these initiatives are based on local ownership and reject top-down, technocratic models of development.

Forms of Gender inequality

The afflicted world in which we live is characterized by deeply unequal sharing of the burden of adversities between women and men. However, inequality between women and men can take very many different forms.

(1) Mortality inequality: In some regions in the world, inequality between women and men directly involves matters of life and death, and takes the brutal form of unusually high mortality rates of women and a consequent preponderance of men in the total population, as opposed to the preponderance of women found in societies with little or no gender bias in health care and nutrition. Mortality inequality has been observed extensively in North Africa and in Asia, including China and South Asia.

(2) Natality inequality: Given a preference for boys over girls that many male-dominated societies have, gender inequality can manifest itself in the form of the parents' wanting the new born to be a boy rather than a girl. There was a time when this could be no more than a wish (a daydream or a nightmare, depending on one's perspective), but with the availability of modern techniques to determine the gender of the fetus, sex-selective abortion has become common in many countries. It is particularly prevalent in East Asia, in China and South Korea in particular, but also in Singapore and Taiwan, and it is beginning to emerge as a statistically significant phenomenon in India and South Asia as well. This is high-tech sexism.

(3) Basic facility inequality: Even when demographic characteristics do not show much or any anti-female bias, there are other ways in which women can have less than a square deal. Afghanistan may be the only country in the world the government of which is keen on actively excluding girls from schooling (it combines this with other features of massive gender inequality), but there are many countries in Asia and Africa, and also in Latin America, where girls have far less opportunity of schooling than boys do. There are other deficiencies in basic facilities available to women, varying from encouragement to cultivate one's natural talents to fair participation in rewarding social functions of the community.

(4) Special opportunity inequality: Even when there is relatively little difference in basic facilities including schooling, the opportunities of higher education may be far fewer for young women than for young men. Indeed, gender bias in higher education and professional training can be observed even in some of the richest countries in the world, in Europe and North America.

(5) Professional inequality: In terms of employment as well as promotion in work and occupation, women often face greater handicap than men. A country like Japan may be quite egalitarian in matters of demography or basic facilities, and even, to a great extent, in higher education, and yet progress to elevated levels of employment and occupation seems to be much more problematic for women than for men.

(6) Ownership inequality: In many societies the ownership of property can also be very unequal. Even basic assets such as homes and land may be very asymmetrically shared. The absence of claims to property can not only reduce the voice of women, but also make it harder for women to enter and flourish in commercial, economic and even some social activities This type of inequality has existed in most parts of the world, though there are also local variations. For example, even though traditional property rights have favoured men in the bulk of India, in what is now the state of Kerala, there has been, for a long time, matrilineal inheritance for an influential part of the community, viz. the Nayars.

(7) Household inequality: There are, often enough, basic inequalities in gender relations within the family or the household, which can take many different forms. Even in cases in which there are no overt signs of anti-female bias in, say, survival or son-preference or education, or even in promotion to higher executive positions, the family arrangements can be quite unequal in terms of sharing the burden of housework and child care. It is, for example, quite common in many societies to take it for granted that while men will naturally work outside the home, women could do it if and only if they could combine it with various inescapable and unequally shared household duties. This is sometimes called "division of labour," though women could be forgiven for seeing it as "accumulation of labour."

Cooperative Conflict and women's agency

In the book, "An Uncertain Glory – India and its contradictions" by Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze, the authors have mentioned that,

the force and effectiveness of women's agency depend on a number of social influences of which the nature of the family is a significant component. In traditional arrangements, women tend to get a smaller share of the benefits (for example, less favorable medical and educational attention and a very much larger share of the chores (particularly in the unshared burden of housework and the care of children and old people). The sharing of both benefits and burdens can become more equitable when women – particularly young women – have a stronger voice, related for example to being literate and schooled and to having recognizably gainful employment rather than only unremunerated housework and unrecognized drudgery.

The consequences of gender asymmetry can extend well beyond the domain of gender inequality itself, since the lives of other people are also involved. In this context, it is particularly important to see the role of women's agency in reducing child mortality and restraining fertility.

The adverse effects of very high birth rates include the denial of women's freedom to do other things – through persistent bearing and rearing of children – routinely imposed on many Asian and African women. Recent demographic work has also brought out the influence of women's agency and of women's empowerment in reducing child mortality. The positive impact of women's agency may extend well beyond the connection between women's empowerment and demographic change. Women's agency has played a crucial role in the recent progress of many aspects of living standards in Bangladesh and also in recent experiences of relatively rapid social progress in India – notably in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Violence against women

One of the major aspects of gender inequality is that of violence against women, in particular the high incidence of rape. Although the recorded rape per 100,000 people according to the data of the United Nations Office on Drugs and crime is more in USA – 27.3, UK – 28.8, Sweeden – 63.5, South Africa – 120, compared to 1.8 in India, that is grossly an underestimate and a consequence of the underreporting of rape incidences in India.

Sex selective abortion

In India, the use of technology to abort female foetuses is a discriminatory phenomenon noticed particularly in Northern and

Western India. This is a reflection of traditional patriarchal mindset. The female – male ratio in the age group 0-6 (called as child sex ratio) has fallen from 927 girls per 1000 women in 2001 to 914 girls per 1000 boys in 2011 which indicates that this decline is largely a result of sex-selective abortion. In comparison, the female-male ratio at birth is 940-950 females per 1000 males in European countries. Indirect estimates indicate that ratio as 919 female per 1000 male in India with states like Haryana – 842, Punjab – 856 per 1000 males as per 2011 census.

Conclusion

Amartya Sen writes in his book, An uncertain Glory – India and its Contradictions that "Gender inequality is among the disparities that keep large number of people on the margin of the 'new India' – not only women themselves, but also men and children who would benefit from a more active, informed and equal participation of women in social and public life'. Girls who were out of the purview of education a century ago, are now flocking to schools across India. The gender bias in schools is narrowing. Women are occupying important positions in academia, corporate world, literature, politics, art, music and many other professions. But yet, gender inequality is an important reality of Indian society. In India, there is larger incidences of mortality of female children over male due to greater neglect of health and nutrition of female children. The women's workforce participation (excluding household work) is exceptionally low by international standards and reflects the negative social attitude towards women's work outside the household in large parts of the society. . This is in sharp contrast to other Asian countries (including Bangladesh) in their phase of rapid growth which has usually been accompanied by a major increase in women's employment opportunities. Only 17 out of 184 countries in World Development Indicators have a lower female labor force participation rate (age 15 years and above) than India's abysmal 29%. Most of these countries are in West Asia and North Africa. The women potential in India is an untapped resource that can make India a very different country.

The women's political representation is another area of gender disparity. Women are now entitled to 33% (even 50% in come states) in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This has enabled millions of women take up active role in local politics which has led to significant changes in priorities, activities and perceptions of PRIs. But the proportion of women in parliament had been around 10%.

There are other manifestations of India's patriarchal form of social and cultural relations: property inheritance is patrilineal, post marital residence is patrilocal, women's freedom of movement is quite restricted, violence against women (including domestic violence) is still prevalent in large parts of the society.

Thus, as Amartya Sen remarks, "India has to be concerned not only with what can be done for women, but also with what women can do for India, which remains an untapped resource that can make India a different country".

References

1. DreÌzeJean, and Amartya Sen. An Uncertain Glory India and Its Contradictions. Princeton University Press, 2013.
2. Amartya Sen, Working paper – Gender and Cooperative Conflicts – United Nations
3. Amartya Sen, Paper - Many faces of Gender Inequality
4. Sen, Amartya. The Argumentative Indian : Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity. New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013.
5. Tagore, Rabindranath. Essay - "Samaj" , Rabindra Rachanabali. Special Edition ed., Shantiniketan, West Bengal, Visvabharati University
6. Heywood, Andrew. Global Politics. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

22

Economic Development and Women Empowerment

Sanchita Jana

Abstract

There is increasing recognition that economically empowering women is essential both to realize women's rights and to achieve broader development goals such as economic growth, poverty reduction, health, education and welfare. In the last five years, a broad range of organizations have committed themselves to the goal of women's economic empowerment. These organizations realize that economically empowering women is a win-win that can benefit not only women, but society more broadly. It promotes women's ability to achieve their rights and well-being while also reducing household poverty, increasing economic growth and productivity, and increasing efficiency.

Keywords: *Women's Rights, Education, Health, Family Welfare, Productivity*

A Prelude

Women 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? The interrelationships on both sides of the empowerment—development nexus 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.

Defining Women's Economic Empowerment

Definition: A woman is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions. To succeed and advance economically, women need the skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions. To have the power and agency to benefit from economic activities, women need to have the ability to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits. It is widely recognised that empowerment is a multidimensional process, encompassing changes in the political, social and economic spheres of life and that these different dimensions of empowerment are closely inter-related so that signifi cant changes in one dimension is likely to generate changes in others. Women's economic empowerment relates to the enhancement of women's capacity for strategic choice and agency in the sphere of the economy and to the possibilities this opens up for change in other spheres of their lives. It thus offers policy makers one of a number possible entry points into broader processes of empowerment. There are a number of arguments as to why a focus on women's economic empowerment is important. First of all, gender inequalities in the division of labour between paid and unpaid work, women's primary responsibility for unpaid care work within the home, and the associated inequalities in access to valued resources and opportunities are at the core of women's subordinate status in society. They leave women dependent on male provision for themselves and their children, or else forced to compete in markets for their labour, goods and services on highly disadvantaged terms. Their disadvantaged status in the market place in turn reinforces women's lack of strategic agency, both in relation to their own lives as well as in the wider society. The economic empowerment of women is thus a matter of human rights and social justice. The economic empowerment of women is also critical for human development. There is now a well-established body of evi. There is now a well-established body of evidence to suggest that women's economic empowerment, their access to and control over valued resources, has strong positive implications for the well-being of the family, including their own and their children's well being. It increases the chances that they will seek family planning and reproductive health services, ensure the survival, health, nutrition and education of their children and, in certain contexts, reduce gender inequalities in household resource allocation. The economic empowerment of women

thus contributes to the development of human capital and human capabilities, including their own. The economic empowerment of women matters for poverty reduction. While early generalisations in the gender and development literature that female-headed households are always necessarily the 'poorest of the poor' has been challenged by subsequent studies, these studies have also served to establish that households that rely solely or primarily on female earnings (ie. female-maintained households) tend to be over-represented at the lower end of the income distribution. This is not surprising. If women have lower levels of education and skills, if they face discrimination in markets for the sale of their goods, services and wage labour as well as in their access to assets, technology and fi nancial services, their efforts to earn a living for themselves and their dependents are likely to be rewarded more unfavourably than those of men with equivalent characterisetics1. Conversely, lower income households with male or joint headship are very generally able to rely on women's earnings to keep their households above the poverty line or to prevent from declining into poverty in times of crisis. Investing in women's economic resources helps poor household to weather crisis and increases their chances of moving out of poverty. Finally, women's economic empowerment is essential if they are to participate in, contribute to and benefi t from growth processes on terms which recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible for them to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefi ts of growth. It therefore brings about a more balanced process of growth. However, this will not be achieved merely by increasing women's access to resources. We know from experience that it is possible to improve women's access to land, to jobs, to credit and so on in ways which are demeaning and exploitative and do little to challenge their subordinate status within the home. We are interested in forms of access which represent a substantive expansion of women's life options and capacity of agency. This is unlikely to occur through market forces alone.

Education has been widely acknowledged by feminists, gender advocates and policy makers as a critical resource in promoting the empowerment of women because of its impacts on both human capital and human capabilities. Some forms of education have received more policy attention than others. The MDG 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment places the emphasis on increasing girls' access to primary education and closing the gender gap. There is evidence

that governments around the world have taken this seriously and that there has been considerable progress in achieving this goal (World Bank, 2007). While universal primary education provides a solid foundation for all investments in human capital, it is unlikely on its own to address structural inequalities between women and men. More needs to be done. First of all, as the Task Force on MDG3 (Grown et al, 2003) argues, the greatest payoffs for women's empowerment is associated with post-primary investments in girls' education. Payoffs in terms of family welfare, child survival and women's own voice, health and bodily integrity have been well documented and shown to apply most strongly to secondary and higher levels education. There are also economic payoffs. Studies from Asia, Latin America and Africa show that higher levels of education increase women's chances of formal employment. They also suggest that while gender differentials returns to schooling vary considerably in different countries, they tend to be larger at primary levels of education than at post secondary levels. In other words, the extension of post primary education to girls from poorer families is necessary to translate their educational attainments into labour market and welfare gains. Secondly, it is widely acknowledged that improving access to education is unlikely to do a great deal to transform wider gender inequalities if the quality of education is not addressed. Improvements in safety and infrastructure are necessary to make schools hospitable for girls to ensure that they complete their schooling. The content of education and interactions with teachers need to be designed to promote critical analytical skills on the part of both girls and boys rather serving as a vehicle for reproducing pre-existing social inequalities, including the traditional gender division of labour. More girls need to be encouraged to go into non-traditional vocational and technical programmes, such as engineering and computer technology. Thirdly, while investments in primary and secondary education among girls address critical gender inequalities in the human capital and capabilities of tomorrow's workers, parents and citizens, they do little to address defi cits in human capital and capabilities in the current generation of working women. Poorer women who missed out on the expansion of educational opportunities fi nd themselves trapped in dead end jobs by lack of their education and skills. There are a variety of ways, including non-formal education, technical and vocational training, agricultural extension services, workplace training, lifelong learning, training for new technology, that could give these women a 'second chance' in their search for better jobs. The under-representation of

women in training opportunities for adult workers helps to reinforce occupational segregation in the economy.

Equalising property rights: land and housing

In rural areas, women's disadvantaged status within both statutory and customary land tenure system has constituted the major barrier to women's economic empowerment. Weak rights to land also translates into weak rights in relation to other natural resources, including water and forest produce. While access to arable land is less important in urban areas, insecurity in rights to homestead land and housing underpins women's insecurity in other aspects of their lives. Inequalities in access to land and housing is also a major cause of women's decline into poverty in the event of the loss of a male breadwinner through death, divorce or desertion since they lose whatever benefi ts they might have enjoyed from their husband's ownership of land and housing. Government efforts to reform existing constitutional, marital, property and family law to bring them in line with internationally agreed commitments to gender equity should therefore be seen as both culmination of one round of struggles by gender equality activists but the commencement of another round to translate formal law into real outcomes. Legal measures can be seen as a fi rst step in a broader process of education, legal support and capacity building to make women both aware of their rights and both able and willing to claim them. Another strategy to improve women's property rights is the potential for giving priority to women as beneficiaries of government interventions and programs. Titling programs in Latin America have developed promising approaches, including, in addition to legal changes, joint titling and explicit guarantees for women's land rights. Experiences from these suggest that legal initiatives that are accompanied by dissemination campaigns are not suffi cient to improve women's status. Preferential treatment of women in public programs such as titling and land reform in Latin America suggests that this provides an appropriate way to increase gender equity and has helped to improve the documentary basis for women's rights which earlier attempts had almost completely neglected.

Involving women in more inclusive systems

Micro-credit programmes have expanded considerably since the 1980s because of its compatibility with the neo-liberal emphasis on integrating poor people into markets, in this case, through the

promotion of their entrepreneurial skills. Over time, programmes have widened beyond the provision of micro-credit to encompass a range of other fi nancial services, including savings, skills development and to a lesser extent, insurance products tailored to the need of their clients. However, while it is customary to refer to 'the microfi nance sector', in reality, there have always been a variety of different kinds of organisations providing fi nancial services to poor women and men. Broadly speaking, they can be divided into those which are oriented to poverty reduction and those which are concerned with f i nancial sustainability. While the former are concerned with promoting the incomes and livelihoods of the poorer sections of the population, the latter tend to prioritise those who are able to make timely loan repayments and hence allow the organisation to stay afl oat. There is considerable variety in the extent to which either category of organisation is concerned with empowering women. The more minimalist models tend to focus entirely on loan disbursement and repayment without concerning themselves very much with their impacts on other aspects of their clients' lives. Others combine microfi nance provision with a range of other services, some directed to addressing the constraints that women face in their entrepreneurial efforts, such as business skills and market information while others take a broader approach, combining support for women's roles in household livelihoods with building their analytical skills, self confi dence and capacity to take collective action around their needs priorities and rights. It may be that moderately poor women with business skills and located within vibrant local economies have benefi ted materially from the fi nancial sustainability model but where comparative evaluations have been carried out, they suggest that impacts on gender inequalities in power relations within the household and in the wider community tend to be strongest when purposive efforts are made to address these issues). Interestingly, it is these more socially aware organisations that appear to weather fi nancial downturns better than do the more business-oriented models: client loyalty is stronger and rates of defaults lower. This was the case in Bolivia at the end of the 1990s and appears to be the case at present in the US.

Building collective capabilities, monitoring change and financing gender equality

In reading through the literature on efforts to address material inequalities between women and women, a number of issues are raised so frequently that it is clear that they are relevant to such efforts,

regardless of the focus of the intervention. The fi rst relates to women's capacity to organise and take collective action around their own needs, interests and priorities. The importance of livelihoods in the lives of poor people means that it is around access to livelihood resources that poor women and men have most frequently come together in collective action. Trade unions in many developing – as well as developed countries – have not always been in the forefront of struggles around the rights of vulnerable workers, particular women. While this is changing through efforts of activist women within and outside the unions, it is important to recognise that the struggle for economic rights straddles a much larger swathe of civil society than trade unions alone. A wide variety of innovative forms of associations have emerged in response to the challenge of organising vulnerable workers. Some organise around specifi c occupational categories – such as waste pickers, janitors, migrant workers and so on – while others take specifi c needs as their entry point. Thus we fi nd organisations that focus on housing needs, others that mobilise around land rights while still others have used credit and savings. These kinds of organisations can be seen as an emergent a civil society committed to holding the state accountable to the needs and interests of people in poverty. The frequency with which advocacy and action by civil society has proved to be the factors which have led to policy changes or policy implementation that promote meaningful change in women's lives suggests that building women's capacity to organise as part of civil society – both within mixed organisations like political parties and trade unions – but also within women-only or womenled organisations that are oriented to women's economic rights and citizenship is a precondition for interventions to be successful. To that extent, support for women's participation in networks, unions, business associations, market networks should be considered something that cuts across all interventions to empowerment women **.Our observation** This suggests that neither economic development nor women's empowerment is the magic bullet it is sometimes made out to be. In order to bring about equity between men and women, in my view a very desirable goal in and of itself, it will be necessary to continue to take policy actions that favor women at the expense of men, and it may be necessary to continue doing so for a very long time. While this may result in some collateral benefits, those benefits may or may not be sufficient to compensate for the cost of the distortions associated with such redistribution. This measure of

realism needs to temper the positions of policymakers on both sides of the development/empowerment debate.

References

A. Almond, Douglas, and lena Edlund. 2008. "SonBiased Sex Ratios in the 2000 United States Census." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 105 (15): 5681–82.

B. Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar, "Naribaad , Lingo Rajniti o Narir Khomotayan ,Avenel Press, 2019

C. Almond, Douglas, lena Edlund, and Kevin Milligan. 2009. "O Sister, Where Art Thou? The Role of Son Preference and Sex Choice: Evidence from Immigrants to Canada." National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 15391.

D. Anderson, Siwan, and Jean-Marie Baland. 2002. "The Economics of Roscas and Intrahousehold Resource Allocation." Quarterly Journal of Economics 117 (3): 963–95.

E. Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar, Sanchita Jana, Biswajit Pal, Nari o Amader Somaj : Ekti Jibon Dorpon , 2023

F. Angrist, Josh. 2002. "How Do Sex Ratios Affect Marriage and labor Markets? Evidence from America's Second Generation." Quarterly Journal of Economics 117 (3): 997–1038. Ashraf, Nava. 2009.

G. "Spousal Control and Intra-household Decision Making: An Experimental Study in the Philippines." American Economic Review 99 (4): 1245–77.

H. Ashraf, Nava, Erica Field, and Jean lee. 2010. "Household Bargaining and Excess Fertility: An Experimental Study in Zambia." Unpublished.

I. Attanasio, Orazio, and Katja Kaufmann. 2009. "Educational Choices, Subjective Expectations, and Credit Constraints." National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 15087.

J. Babcock, linda, and Sara laschever. 2003. Women Don't Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. Banerjee, Abhijit Vinayak, Esther Duflo, Rachel Glennerster, and Dhruva Kothari. 2010.

K. "Improving Immunisation Coverage in Rural India: Clustered Randomised Controlled Evaluation of Immunisation Campaigns With and Without Incentives."

L. Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar, Sanchita Jana, Biswajit Pal, Nari o Amader Somaj : Ekti Jibon Dorpon , 2023

M. British Medical Journal 340: C2220. Basu, Karna. 2011. "Hyperbolic Discounting and the Sustainability of Rotational Savings Arrangements." American Economic Journal: Microeconomics 3 (4): 143–71.

23

Global Women Empowerment: An Appraisal

Debaroti Das

Abstract

Recently, Women empowerment has become a global topic. It is an imperative criterion for socio-economic development. Europe leads the women empowerment status followed by North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Asia and the Pacific. Southern Asia ranks seventh, with a gender parity score of 63.7%. Women participation has increased in different sectors of economy due to sanction of child-care leave, better working environment, equal treatment before law. More women friendly environment is essential for the betterment of the human society as a whole which has shrinked to our palm through the advancement of mobile and internet technology.

Keywords: *Women empowerment, FAO, ECA, Global Gender Gap, DEI.*

Introduction:

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), increasing women's empowerment is essential for women's well-being (Women for Women's problems) and has a positive impact on agricultural production, food security, diets and child nutrition. Twelve advanced economies are the world's only economies that score 100 – Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Around 2.4 billion women of working age are not afforded equal economic opportunity. 178 countries maintain legal barriers that prevent women's full economic participation. The Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region is the second highest scoring region, with an average score of 84.1. Four

economies reformed last year. **Armenia** and **Ukraine** introduced paid paternity leave, and **Georgia** introduced paid parental leave. Ukraine also equalized the ages at which women and men can retire with full pension benefits. The East Asia and the Pacific region continues to reform its legislation towards gender equality, but at a slow pace. Two economies from East Asia reformed last year. Cambodia introduced an old-age pension system that sets equal ages at which women and men can retire with full pension benefits. Vietnam eliminated all restrictions on women's employment.

The 2024 Global Gender Gap Index shows that while no country has achieved full gender parity, 97% of the economies included in this edition have closed more than 60% of their gap, compared to 85% in 2006. Iceland (93.5%) is again ranked 1st and has been leading the index for a decade and a half. It also continues to be the only economy to have closed over 90% of its gender gap. Out of the remaining nine economies in the top 10, eight have closed over 80% of their gap. European economies occupy seven spots out of the global top 10. In addition to Iceland, these include Finland (2nd, 87.5%), Norway (3rd, 87.5%), Sweden (5th , 81.6%), Germany (7th, 81%), Ireland (9th, 80.2%) and Spain (10th, 79.7%). The remaining three spots are occupied by economies from Eastern Asia and the Pacific (New Zealand, 4th, 83.5%), Latin America and the Caribbean (Nicaragua, 6th, 81.1%), and Sub-Saharan Africa (Namibia, 8th, 80.5%). Lithuania (11th, 79.3%) and Belgium (12th, 79.3%) dropped out of the top 10, with Spain and Ireland climbing +8 and +2 ranks, respectively, to join the top performers in 2024. Among the 146 economies covered in the 2024 index, the Health and Survival gender gap has closed by 96%, the Educational Attainment gap by 94.9%, the Economic Participation and Opportunity gap by 60.5%, and the Political Empowerment gap by 22.5%.

Methodology:

The global gender report has been studied to make an appraisal of the women empowerment is happening worldwide. The scenario is very bright for the improvement of women in all sectors of economy but few regions are still there where more impulse is needed for uplift of women.

Types of Women Empowerment

1. Social (Women Empowerment)

Social empowerment may be one of the most noticeable types of strengthening displayed in the established press. It fortifies ladies' social relations and their situations in friendly designs, providing them all the more motivation outside of the home.Their commitments to society are perceived and esteemed rather than peered downward on basically in light of the fact that it was a lady's creation.

Social strengthening additionally retaliates against segregation, done letting individuals of various inabilities, races, nationalities, religions, or sexual orientations be strolled over by what's considered 'typical'.

2. Educational (Women Empowerment)

Education is a vital piece of development and growth, however, there are still places on the planet that deny instruction to young ladies.This removes a major ability everybody has the option to information. Without appropriate instruction for all, orientation strengthening is preposterous.

Training places everybody on an equivalent balance and allows little kids to approach what their freedoms and obligations are. Not just that, acquiring information can support fearlessness, and confidence, and make young ladies independent.It additionally gives them admittance to the advancement of social, political, scholarly, and strict awareness, and can deter the development of fanaticism, bias, notion, bigotry, etc.

3. Economic

Individuals say money can't purchase joy, however, being in a difficult situation can remove admittance to become enabled. Being poor, landless, denied, or persecuted doesn't permit admittance to assets that those in great monetary standings do.Shutting this hole would permit everybody to have equivalent balance, and ladies, specifically, would acquire a more critical portion of command over the material, human, scholarly, and monetary assets.

4. Political (Women Empowerment)

Having a voice in legislative issues can be significant in allowing a gathering's perspective to be driven into the illumination of the established press, and that is the same for pushing ladies' freedoms.

The political inclusion of ladies "infers the decentralization of force and authority in the denied, persecuted, and frail individuals who have not had the option to take part in the dynamic cycle and the execution of approaches and projects of both government and associations along with familial and cultural issues". All in all, having a political impact would not just give a voice to the individuals who haven't had a voice in how things are administered, yet it would likewise permit the chance of arrangements and projects being instituted that would work with these separated gatherings.

5. Psychological

Psychological empowerment lines up with social strengthening it violates the "conventional and man-centric restrictions and social commitments" and releases ladies past what's generally anticipated of them in the public arena.This can assemble self-assurance, assist ladies with perceiving their self-esteem, and allow them the opportunity to assume responsibility for their pay and body. Each of the five of these classes interweaves with each other, yet it's similarly critical to consider them independently too. Each gathering has different primary objectives they're focusing on, so attempting to zero in on them, in general, would be unbeneficial at last. Realizing what work must be placed into these five classes can give a lift in the correct heading, and permit strengthening for ladies, however in the long run for all. (Edukar, 2024)

Regional Scenario of Women Empowerment:

- **Europe** leads the 2024 regional gender gap rankings, having closed 75% of its gap in 2024, with an overall improvement of +6.2 percentage points since 2006. The top five European economies – Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Germany – all rank in the global top 10. However, while 21 out of the 40 economies in the region have closed over 75% of their gender gap, the distance between the top and bottom rank indicates broad intraregional disparities. Iceland, the highest-ranking, leads by 29 percentage points over Türkiye, which sits at the bottom. Europe shows modest gains in economic parity, with a slight uptick of +0.4 percentage points in its Economic Participation and Opportunity score (67.8%). The region's educational gender parity score is the third-highest (99.5%), globally, while health parity has stagnated. With an upwards

trending curve, political parity in Europe has progressively scaled to the highest score among all regions in 2024 (36%).

- Ranked second, **Northern America** reports a gender parity score of 74.8%. Compared to other regions, however, the region has closed its regional gender gap by +4.3 percentage points since 2006. Despite leading in the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex, its economic parity score has declined slightly to 76.3%, reflecting disparities in earned income and women's representation in senior leadership positions. Maintaining stability throughout editions, Northern America scores 100% in Educational Attainment and 96.9% in Health and Survival. In Political Empowerment, Northern America ranks third with a score of 26%, showing progress since 2006, yet also demonstrating persistent underrepresentation of women in ministerial and parliamentary positions.
- In third place is **Latin America and the Caribbean**, with a gender parity score of 74.2%. The region has made the biggest leap since 2006, reducing its overall gap by 8.3 percentage points. The region reached its highest economic parity score to date, of 65.7%, a slight uptick of +.5 percentage points from 2023, surging as a result of strong parity in labour-force participation and in professional roles. Educational Attainment and Health and Survival remain stable at 99.5% and 97.6%, respectively. While most economies show parity in literacy and education enrolment, disparities in access persist. At 34%, Latin America and the Caribbean has the second highest Political Empowerment score of all regions, having narrowed the gap by over 22.4 percentage points since 2006.
- **Eastern Asia and the Pacific** ranks fourth, with an overall gender parity score of 69.2%. While there's been a positive shift of +3.1 percentage points overall since 2006, only New Zealand and the Philippines have made the global top 10 since then. The Economic Participation and Opportunity score for the region is 71.7%, showing progress since 2023 but revealing significant disparities between countries in labour-force participation rates and workforce representation. The region's Educational Attainment gender parity score stands at 95.1%, reflecting gender gaps in literacy and enrolment levels. Health

and Survival, despite a slight improvement, ranks last, at 95%, with some countries still lagging in healthy life expectancy and sex birth ratio parity. Political Empowerment has improved overall since 2006 (+3.4 percentage points), but its 2024 score of 14.5% ranks it third from the bottom against other regions.

- **Central Asia** ranks fifth out of eight regions with a score of 69.1%. Despite a slight regression in the parity score, there has been an overall improvement of +2.3 percentage points since 2006. Notably, all seven economies in Central Asia have achieved parity levels equal to or higher than 67%, with Armenia (72.1%), Georgia (71.6%), and Kazakhstan (71%) leading the region. With a 4.8 percentage-point difference between the highest and lowest performer, Central Asia is one of the most homogenous groupings. The region maintains near-parity status in Educational Attainment, the second highest score of all regions (99.6%), after Northern America (100%). However, the region saw regression in both economic and political parity: the 73.4% Economic Participation and Opportunity parity score is -0.6 points lower than in 2023, and the 12.8% Political Empowerment parity score declines by -1.6 percentage points.
- In sixth place is **Sub-Saharan Africa**, with a gender parity score of 68.4%. The region has advanced by an overall +5.6 percentage points since 2006. While 21 out of 35 economies are in the top 100, Namibia stands out as a top 10 performer. Over half of the countries in the region have closed over 70% of their gender gap; however, the top and bottom ranks are divided by 22.8 percentage points. Economic Participation and Opportunity stands at 68.1%, with progress in labour-force participation and positive results in technical and professional roles. Ranking last in Educational Attainment, Sub-Saharan Africa has the widest gap to close, with a score of 88.9%. Health and Survival stands at 97.1%, while Political Empowerment shows improvement at 22.6%, with notable strides in ministerial and parliamentary representation, particularly in Mozambique and South Africa.
- In 2024, **Southern Asia** ranks seventh, with a gender parity score of 63.7%, showing a variable trajectory throughout editions that has nonetheless resulted in a modest +3.9

percentage-point improvement since 2006. Six out of the seven economies in the region rank below the top 100, and only six in the region have closed two-thirds of their gender gap. Southern Asia ranks last in Economic Participation and Opportunity. Its gender parity score of 38.8% communicates low labour-force participation rates for women and significant gender disparities in leadership roles. Educational Attainment scores 94.5%, having progressed by +13.4 percentage points since 2006, but retains substantive gender gaps in literacy and education, notably in Pakistan and Nepal. Health and Survival remains stable at 95.4%, while Political Empowerment sees a slight 0.7-point decline from 2023 to 26%, reflecting gender imbalances in ministerial and parliamentary representation across the region.

- **Middle East and North Africa** ranks last among all regions, with a gender parity score of 61.7%. Despite this result, the region has seen an overall positive trajectory since 2006, advancing its gender gap score by +3.9 percentage points. In Economic Participation and Opportunity, MENA countries rank 7th overall, with a score of 43.1%. Labour-force participation remains low in the region, but representation in professional roles is evolving positively. Educational Attainment has seen marked progress, with a score of 97.2%, and shows widespread gender parity in literacy and enrolment across levels of education. Health and Survival remains stable at 96.4%, with balanced sex ratios at birth but enduring gaps in healthy life expectancy. The region's performance in Political Empowerment in 2024 ranks lowest of all at 11.7%, although behind the figure is an +8.4 percentage-point increase in political parity since 2006, with increasing levels of women's representation in ministerial and parliamentary roles across economies.

Escalation of women empowerment globally:

1. **Economic, political and business context**: The current global economic and regulatory context is shaping gender parity outcomes. A mixed economic outlook offers hints of short-term optimism, while predictions of long-term growth rates are at their lowest in 30 years. Economic prospects for women and girls are threatened by the continued downturns and

prolonged crises. While the adoption of economic policies to advance gender equality has increased overall, across regions there are stark differences in not only adoption but also resourcing and implementation. Raising the required resources to close the gap requires a fundamental mindset to recognize gender parity as an engine for new, high-quality growth. Encouragingly, policy developments in the care economy signal growing recognition of the economic significance of caregiving. Business efforts to improve gender parity are gaining momentum in Latin America, the Middle East, and East Asia. Where diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts are longer lasting, the returns follow: increased productivity, adaptability to change and stronger innovation outcomes. Gender parity is a competitive advantage in an increasingly tough macro-economic and business environment.

2. **Evolving gender gaps in the global labour market**: Parity in labour-force participation globally has continued to improve since last edition, rising beyond 2018 levels to reach 65.7% for the constant sample of economies tracked since 2006 - and standing at an aggregate score of 66.7% for those included in 2024 alone. Yet, regional variances continue to show that while women's workforce participation is recovering at the global level, parity advances at very different speeds across contexts. The sustainability of this trend, however, remains uncertain. Global unemployment is expected to rise in lower-income economies, and the jobs gap, a broader measure of those looking for work, also includes a disproportionate number of women.

3. **Workforce representation and leadership**: In 2024, LinkedIn data shows that women's workforce representation remains below men's across nearly every industry and economy, with women accounting for 42% of the global workforce and 31.7% of senior leaders. Top-level positions remain narrowly accessible for women, globally speaking, illustrated by the global "drop to the top": in 2024, the ascent from entry level to the C-suite is steeped in a 21.5 percentage-point difference in representation. While women are close to occupying nearly half of entry-level positions, they fall short of representing just one-quarter of C-suite roles. Hailed in past editions as a promising trend, women's hiring into leadership began to

deteriorate, from 37.5% to 36.9% in 2023, and continued dropping in early 2024 to 36.4%, below 2021 levels. LinkedIn research indicates that worsening macro-economic conditions are linked to a decrease in hiring women into senior leadership roles. However, the higher women's representation in the workforce is, the greater the resilience to retrenchment during economic downturns.

4. **Leadership representation in government**: In 2024, the largest global population in history is set to vote in over 60 national elections, including in major economies such as Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan and the United States. Over the past 50 years, nearly half (47.2%) of economies tracked by the Global Gender Gap Index have had at least one woman in top political office. Gender parity in parliamentary representation reached a record high of 33% in 2024, nearly doubling since 2006 (18.8%). At the regional level, Latin America demonstrates continuous improvement over time.
5. **The role of professional networks**: Gender parity in the workforce can be advanced through both formal measures like quotas and policies, as well as through informal factors such as professional networks. LinkedIn data suggests gender gaps in online professional networks lead to men typically having larger networks and stronger networks than women. Stronger networks are associated with increased probability of career progression and receive more recruiter outreach. However, one silver lining is that women have more "weak" ties, which have been linked to better career outcomes.
6. **The role of equitable care systems**: Women's workforce participation is only just recovering from the recent surge in caregiving responsibilities, highlighting the urgent need for equitable care systems. However, attitudes and frameworks for care are evolving alongside the growing demand for broader care provision. In the past 50 years, the average number of maternity leave days have increased from 63 to 107, and paternity leave days have increased from less than a day to nine, on average. This is important as World Bank research has found that increased parity in leave allocations is positively correlated with higher female labour-force participation. Further actions are needed beyond childcare if

workers are to be supported as informal caregivers and / or as formal care workers.

7. **Gender gaps skewing the technology transition**: Women's representation in both science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and non-STEM workforces has increased since 2016, yet women remain underrepresented in STEM roles, comprising only 28.2% of the STEM workforce compared to 47.3% in non-STEM sectors. The "drop to the top" from entry-level to C-suite positions is more pronounced in STEM occupations than in non-STEM roles. Women make up over half of the workforce base in non-STEM roles, compared to only a third in STEM. In turn, they make up a fourth of non-STEM leaders, and only over one-tenth in STEM. This gives women a double disadvantage with regards to technological and workforce transitions, as they continue to occupy the lower-growth, lower-paying jobs that are likely to be negatively affected in the short term.
8. **Gender gaps in AI talent**: Recent developments are more promising when it comes to AI talent specifically. As technology becomes increasingly central to business transformation, new LinkedIn data reveals that the concentration of female talent in AI engineering has more than doubled since 2016. While women still have a smaller industry presence than men, sectors like Technology, Information, and Media have seen significant increases in female AI talent. At the industry level, gender parity in AI industry representation has increased gradually in Education; Professional Services; Manufacturing; and Technology, Information and Media.
9. **Gender gaps in the skills of the future**: Gender differences in skilling profiles continue, skewing how men and women are engaging in the technological transition and the possibilities they have in the future of work. While men and women continue to showcase STEM skills disproportionately, the share of women with STEM skills has increased since 2016, from 24.4% to 27.1% in less than a decade. From an online learning perspective, Coursera data suggest that gender parity is highest in enrolments for the development of collaboration and leadership skills, teaching and mentoring, empathy and active listening, and leadership and social influence. However,

gender parity in online skilling is currently too low in AI and big data (30%), programming (31%) and networks and cybersecurity (31%) courses to close existing workforce gaps.

10. **Gender gaps in perception of skills demand and opportunities to upskill**: A majority of male and female employees are actively seeking opportunities to expand their skillset, with most possessing a good understanding of how their job requirements will transform over the next five years. Gender differences, however, are evident in the perception of demand, given current roles, with women estimating digital, analytical, and green skills to be less important to their current career trajectories over the next five years. There is also a gender gap in perceived opportunities to acquire the skills of the future. As men and women transition from schooling to the workforce, their skillsets continue to be shaped and valued differently.

Conclusion:

Women empowerment is essential for gifting society a better citizen who will bring progress in the society by their work as a child is first taught all customs, manners and rituals by its mother. There has been improvement but more is essential for an all-round development of society as a whole.

References:

1. Global Gender Report, 2024
2. FAO Report, 2024
3. Wikipedia : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s empowerment
4. https://www.vacnetwork.org/?msclkid=fceb1ebfca441536444e79c7cb741bae
5. https://edukedar.com/women-empowerment/#gsc.tab=0

24

Bridging the Gender Gap: Women Entrepreneurs in Indian MSMEs

Dr. Sanchita De

Abstract

Women entrepreneurs significantly contribute to rural India's socio-economic transformation through their role in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector. They foster employment, economic independence, and sustainable innovation, narrowing urban-rural disparities. MSMEs, accounting for 633.88 lakh enterprises as per the NSS 73rd round, are critical to India's economy, generating 11.10 crore jobs and driving industrialization while addressing income inequality. The sector is dominated by micro enterprises (99% of total MSMEs), employing over 97% of the workforce. Major activities include manufacturing (196.65 lakh enterprises, 360.41 lakh jobs), trade (230.35 lakh enterprises, 387.18 lakh jobs), and other services (206.85 lakh enterprises, 362.22 lakh jobs). Despite their potential, women entrepreneurs face challenges, as only 20.37% of MSMEs are female-owned. Most women-led enterprises are micro-level (20.44%), with reduced representation in small (5.26%) and medium (2.67%) enterprises. West Bengal leads with 23.42% of female-owned MSMEs, while South India hosts five of the top 10 states, indicating a supportive entrepreneurial environment. Government initiatives like the Mahila Coir Yojana, TREAD, PMEGP, and ESDP aim to address these disparities by providing financial support, skill training, and capacity-building opportunities. These schemes empower women, foster regional development, and promote innovation. This study fills a literature gap by evaluating MSME performance and women's participation using secondary data. It underscores the critical need for policies to enhance women's involvement in larger-scale enterprises, driving equitable growth and economic progress.

Keywords: *Gender Gap, Women Entrepreneurs, Indian MSMEs, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, Socio-Economic Development, Economic Empowerment*

1. Introduction

Women entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in the development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in rural India, contributing significantly to the region's socio-economic transformation. By establishing and managing various businesses, these women not only generate employment opportunities but also foster economic independence and empowerment within their communities. Their entrepreneurial ventures, often rooted in local resources and traditions, promote sustainable development and innovation, bridging the gap between urban and rural economic disparities. Through their resilience and creativity, women entrepreneurs in rural India drive inclusive growth, enhancing the overall economic landscape and contributing to the region's progress.

1.1 Importance of MSMEs in Indian Economy

India's Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) are crucial drivers of the country's economic growth. By creating job opportunities and promoting industrialization in both rural and urban areas, these MSMEs help reduce income inequality among the population. They significantly contribute to the Indian economy's growth through local and export production, requiring less capital investment, offering operational flexibility, and fostering technology-oriented businesses. MSMEs complement the major industries in the economy and play a vital role in the country's socioeconomic progress. After the agricultural sector, MSMEs rank second in generating employment opportunities and have a higher labour-capital ratio. The government has recently acknowledged the importance of the MSME sector in boosting the manufacturing sector's GDP contribution. Policymakers have long aimed for a diversified industrial base, but the Indian economy has transitioned from an agrarian to a service-based economy, overlooking the manufacturing sector's significance. From the outset, the MSME sector has been a dynamic part of the Indian economy, producing a diverse range of products for both domestic and international markets. They have supported the growth of coir, khadi, and village industries and have collaborated with relevant ministries, state governments, and stakeholders to enhance and develop rural areas.

1.2 Role of Women Entrepreneurs in Indian Economy

Over the past few decades, women entrepreneurship has been rapidly growing in India. Female entrepreneurs are crucial to the

nation's economic development, not only contributing economically but also influencing social norms, promoting inclusivity, and driving innovation. Women entrepreneurs are those who start, plan, and manage a business enterprise. According to the Indian government, a women-owned and controlled business is defined as one where at least 51% of the capital is owned and controlled by women, and at least 51% of the jobs created by the business are held by women. Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a significant role in empowering women by offering entrepreneurial opportunities and employment. The Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises provides training and skill development initiatives, equipping women with essential skills and knowledge. These activities enhance their entrepreneurial abilities and prepare them to handle the challenges of business ownership. By breaking down stereotypes and enabling women to take on leadership roles, develop their skills, and achieve financial independence, these enterprises have a positive impact on their communities and families. Women involved in MSMEs gain opportunities for income generation, which boosts their sense of achievement, self-worth, and financial security. Furthermore, MSMEs often offer flexible work schedules, helping women balance their domestic and professional responsibilities effectively.

As women make a significant part of Indian population, it is their right to contribute significantly in the economy. As women take part in entrepreneurship, they help in job creation, poverty alleviation and in many other sectors, explained below:

- **Economic Growth:** Women contribute to economic growth by starting businesses that manufacture goods and provide services, thereby boosting the country's GDP. This entrepreneurial activity fosters economic development alongside GDP growth.
- **Employment Generation:** Unemployment is a significant issue in the Indian economy. Entrepreneurial activities help address this challenge. When women engage in entrepreneurship and establish businesses, they create job opportunities in society.
- **Balanced Regional Growth:** The government offers various incentives and subsidies to set up industrial units in rural and underdeveloped regions to reduce regional disparities. Women entrepreneurs take advantage of these opportunities, establishing businesses in these areas, fostering development, and reducing regional imbalances.

- **Capital Formation:** When women start their businesses, idle funds are mobilized and invested in these ventures. These investments lead to better resource utilization and capital formation.
- **Better Standard of Living:** By participating in entrepreneurial activities, women start new businesses, primarily employing other women. They offer products and services at reasonable prices, which helps improve people's standard of living.
- **Women Empowerment:** Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in empowering other women. Successful women entrepreneurs become role models, inspiring others to pursue entrepreneurial activities and promoting gender equality.
- **Innovation:** Women entrepreneurs contribute to society by bringing unique and innovative solutions to societal and business problems. Their contributions lead to innovation.

Women entrepreneurs significantly impact society and contribute to the growth of the Indian economy. They drive social development, achieve financial independence for other women, and challenge prejudices and social norms that hinder women's growth. Through their entrepreneurial activities, women promote inclusive and equitable growth in society.

1.3 Government Initiatives for Women Entrepreneurs in the MSME Sector in India

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) serve as a platform to promote women entrepreneurs in India. The government offers special support to women entrepreneurs for establishing MSMEs. The Ministry of MSMEs, along with other ministries, provides technical and financial assistance, as well as training programs, to boost women's participation in the MSME sector.

- **Skill Upgradation and Mahila Coir Yojana:** This is a sub-scheme under the main scheme "Coir Vikas Yojana." Implemented by the Coir Board, this scheme aims to empower women and provide self-employment opportunities for rural women artisans in the coir sector. The scheme offers training to rural women artisans with a monthly stipend of Rs. 1000. After completing the training programs, a 75% subsidy is provided for machinery and equipment to establish enterprises producing coir products.

- **Trade-Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD):** TREAD is a government scheme aimed at economically empowering women by providing training, counselling, and financial assistance for non-farm sector activities. Training and counselling are provided by organizations such as the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Development Institutes, Entrepreneurship Development Institutes (EDIs), and the National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (NIMSME). The scheme provides 30% credit assistance (up to a maximum of 30 lakhs) through eligible NGOs.
- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Program (PMEGP):** Implemented by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) as the nodal agency, PMEGP aims to generate employment by setting up self-employed micro-enterprises, ventures, and projects. The maximum admissible limit is 50 lakhs for the manufacturing sector and 20 lakhs for the service sector. Women entrepreneurs receive a higher subsidy under this program, with a subsidy rate of 35% in rural areas and 25% in urban areas. According to the MSME annual report for 2022-23, a total of 259,339 women beneficiaries have been supported under this program.
- **Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme:** A sub-component of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission, this program is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development. The Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme aims to empower women by helping them set up micro-units as members of Self-Help Groups.
- **Entrepreneurial Skill Development Program (ESDP):** ESDPs are conducted to train and develop the technical and vocational skills required to establish micro and small enterprises. Twenty percent of the total EDPs are exclusively conducted for women and other marginalized sections of society.

In addition to these schemes, the Government of India provides various incentives and subsidies through different ministries and their programs to help women entrepreneurs set up business units and empower women.

2. Literature Review

Several research has been conducted to assess the role of women in the development of MSMEs in national and international level. Garg and Agarwal (2017) aimed to assess the role of women in economic development and the challenges they face. Their study focuses on India, particularly in the MSME sector. They employed a literature review methodology to analyze various sources. Their findings reveal that, despite women's significant contributions to GDP and employment, they face considerable barriers including limited access to education, financial resources, and social support. Women-owned enterprises remain a minority, representing only 7.36% of MSMEs in India, underscoring the need for targeted policy interventions and support systems to promote women entrepreneurship. Das Gupta and Basak (2016) examine the role of commercial banks (CBs) in empowering women entrepreneurs through financial support. The study focuses on Howrah, particularly its engineering sector. Using an analysis of 34 registered urban light engineering MSEs, the authors investigate the impact of CB financial assistance on women-owned enterprises. They find that while CB support enhances economic empowerment, gender-discriminative credit policies and ownership structures favoring male participation hinder access to finance for women entrepreneurs. The study underscores the necessity for improved financial literacy, diverse financial sources, and effective implementation of gender-sensitive policies by CBs. Goswami and Subherwal (2024) examine the empowerment of women entrepreneurs in India, focusing on initiatives by the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (M/o MSME). The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of program data with qualitative interviews of women entrepreneurs. Key programs like TREAD, Mahila Coir Yojana, PMEGP, and Mudra Yojana are analyzed for their impact. Findings indicate significant progress due to these initiatives, but persistent challenges such as gender biases and limited access to training and finance remain. Digital platforms like Udyam Sakhi and COVID- 19 support measures are noted as crucial development. Subbarayudu and Rao (2021) examine the state of women entrepreneurship in India, focusing on their economic independence and leadership. The study highlights that women constitute only 13.76% of total entrepreneurs, primarily in micro-enterprises and the informal sector. Using a mixed-methods approach, the researchers identify barriers such as limited

funding, market entry difficulties, and gender biases. Despite government initiatives like PMEGP, Udyam Sakhi, and Mudra Yojana, the impact is inconsistent across states, influenced by literacy rates and socio-cultural environments. The study concludes that enhanced policy implementation and societal support are essential for fostering women entrepreneurship and promoting inclusive economic growth. Kumari & Venkatesh (2018) aimed to explore the impact of women entrepreneurs on India's socio-economic development. The study focused on key sectors like manufacturing, IT-BPM, pharmaceuticals, and healthcare, examining the challenges women face, such as cultural biases and limited financial access. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the research found that despite obstacles, women entrepreneurs are crucial for poverty alleviation and economic growth. The study concludes that enhanced support from the government and skill development programs are essential for maximizing women's contributions and fostering sustainable growth. Bhat & Singh (2020) aim to explore the impact of women entrepreneurship on India's socio- economic development, focusing on the MSME sector. They used a qualitative approach, including interviews and case studies, to gather data on challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. The study found that while women significantly contribute to innovation, employment, and economic growth, they encounter obstacles such as limited access to finance, social constraints, and intense competition. The research highlights that supportive policies and training could enhance women's participation in entrepreneurship and thus boost India's economic development. Rajan and Panicker (2020) aimed to assess the impact of women entrepreneurs on socio- economic development through micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Karnataka, India. The study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including surveys and interviews with women entrepreneurs. Findings revealed that despite facing cultural biases and educational barriers, women in Karnataka significantly contribute to economic growth and employment. Government support, such as funding and awards, has been beneficial. The research highlighted that enhancing entrepreneurial performance could be achieved by addressing societal attitudes and educational limitations. Fazalbhoy (2014) examines the role of women entrepreneurship in India's economic development, focusing on both urban and rural areas. The study's objective was to assess the impact of women-operated

businesses on economic growth and innovation. Using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews, Fazalbhoy identified that many women- run enterprises remain unregistered, limiting their access to formal financial systems and government aid. The research found that initiatives like micro-finance and self-help groups (SHGs) in states such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu are vital for supporting women entrepreneurs, providing financial and capacity-building support crucial for their success and integration into the formal economy. The Annual Report of 2022-23 published by Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises states that, women entrepreneurship in India has emerged as a significant driver of economic development, particularly within the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector. Over recent decades, the number of women entrepreneurs has increased, contributing notably to job creation, utilization of modern technology, and expansion in the export market. Despite their potential, women entrepreneurs often face challenges such as limited access to finance and societal constraints. The role of self-help groups (SHGs) has been crucial in mitigating these barriers by providing micro-finance, capacity-building programs, and creating a supportive network that enhances the financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women. States like Kerala and Tamil Nadu exemplify the success of SHGs in fostering women- led micro-enterprises, underscoring the importance of inclusive growth policies and government support in promoting women's entrepreneurship. Addressing these challenges through conducive policies and financial support can further harness the untapped potential of women entrepreneurs, driving broader economic and social development in India. The Sectoral Paper on MSME in West Bengal – 2022- by NABARD highlights the significant role played by women in the MSME sector, contributing to economic development and job creation. Women entrepreneurs predominantly operate micro and small enterprises, often starting with minimal capital and facing challenges such as limited access to credit and markets. Despite these hurdles, they have demonstrated resilience and innovation, particularly in West Bengal, which leads in the number of female MSME entrepreneurs. Government initiatives, such as the support provided by the Directorate of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in West Bengal, have facilitated this growth by offering training, financial support, and creating a conducive environment for business operations. The contribution of women entrepreneurs is evident in their substantial involvement in various clusters producing

diverse products, thereby boosting regional economies. However, the unregistered sector still holds a significant number of women entrepreneurs, indicating a potential area for policy intervention to further enhance their economic impact. Dangi and Ritika (2014) aim to examine the impact of women entrepreneurs within India's MSME sector on economic development. Their study focuses on the evolution of women's roles from homemakers to business leaders, highlighting the challenges they face, including societal biases and financial constraints. Using secondary data analysis, they evaluate the effectiveness of various governmental support initiatives such as the MSME Development Act and Mahila Coir Yojana. The findings reveal that while women are advancing in the MSME sector, significant obstacles remain, which need to be addressed to maximize their economic contribution. Gautam and Kumar (2016) aim to assess the role and challenges of women in Indian MSMEs amid globalization. The study focuses on socio-cultural barriers, limited financial access, and inadequate training. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, including interviews and case studies, the authors find that globalization has opened up new opportunities for women by improving access to markets, information, and technology. Despite positive developments, the study concludes that more targeted strategies and support are needed to ensure sustained growth and empowerment of women entrepreneurs in the globalized economy. Chakraborty (2020) examines the differences and similarities between male and female entrepreneurs in West Bengal, India. The study's objective is to understand gender-specific entrepreneurial motives and their impact on business practices. Using a comprehensive analysis, the research employs qualitative methods to explore decision-making processes, business focuses, risk appetites, and management styles. Findings reveal that men are more financially driven and risk-tolerant, while women prioritize social contributions and are more cautious with financial risks. The study also highlights unique challenges faced by female entrepreneurs, including household responsibilities and societal norms, which impact their business performance. Mukherjee (2022) investigates the impact of COVID-19 on women entrepreneurs in boutique businesses in suburban Kolkata. The study aims to understand how socio-economic factors affected revenue during the pandemic. Using a multiple regression model and interviews with sixty-three female entrepreneurs, it finds that greater experience, higher education, and marital status positively influenced revenue. Challenges such as supply chain disruptions, reduced worker availability, and financial issues

were noted, alongside adaptive strategies like new products, digital sales channels, and hygiene protocols. The research suggests the need for tailored policies to support women entrepreneurs in crises for economic growth and empowerment. Ghosh and Pachori (2022) the significant contributions of women entrepreneurs in the MSME sector to the socioeconomic and regional development of Hooghly District are explored. The study, published in the International Journal of Health Sciences in 2022, employs both primary and secondary data to assess the role of these entrepreneurs in regional development, economic growth, and women's empowerment. Key findings include substantial increases in MSME registrations, employment generation, and investment over a decade, highlighting the critical role women entrepreneurs play in economic stability and decision-making within their communities. The research underscores the need for supportive policies to further enhance the impact of women-led enterprises on regional development. Mukherjee (2022) investigates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women entrepreneurs in boutique businesses in suburban Kolkata. Using a multiple regression model, the study analyzes socio-economic factors influencing revenue during the pandemic. Methodology involved interviews with sixty-three female entrepreneurs. Findings reveal that increased experience, higher education levels, and marital status positively impacted revenue. Challenges included supply chain disruptions, reduced worker availability, and financial issues, while adaptive strategies included new products, digital sales channels, and hygiene protocols. The study suggests the need for tailored policies to support women entrepreneurs and promote economic growth and empowerment. Uddin (2021) explores the motivations, challenges, and success factors for women entrepreneurs in the MSME sector of Bangladesh. The study aims to understand how institutional frameworks influence women's entrepreneurial activities. Conducted in Bangladesh, it employs a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews. Findings reveal that motivations include both 'push' factors like unemployment and 'pull' factors like independence. Challenges stem from socio-cultural norms and inadequate supportive policies. Success factors include institutional support, access to finance, and recognition of women's dual roles. The study emphasizes the need for gender-sensitive policies to enhance women's entrepreneurial success in emerging economies. The study by Singh and Raina (2013) aims to explore the role of women entrepreneurs in the MSME sector in developing countries like India and Bangladesh. The research focuses

on understanding the motivations and challenges faced by these women. Using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews, the study finds that women entrepreneurs significantly contribute to economic development and poverty alleviation. However, they encounter unique socio-cultural and financial barriers, necessitating gender-sensitive policies and institutional support. The study emphasizes the need for tailored support to address the distinct challenges faced by "chance," "forced," and "created" women entrepreneurs. Dilruba and Shoma (2019) examined the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in the CMSME sector in Bangladesh, focusing on the gender gap in access to finance. The study, covering CMSME loan data from 2010-2018, aimed to highlight the disparity in formal credit access. Using a quantitative methodology, the authors found that female entrepreneurs received only 3.5% of the total disbursed loans. The study attributed this disparity to entrenched male- dominated hierarchies and traditional patriarchal norms in financial sectors. The findings suggest the need for comprehensive legislative and regulatory reforms to create a more equitable financial environment for female entrepreneurs. De and Mandal (2018) aim to explore the motives, challenges, and success factors affecting women entrepreneurs in MSMEs. Focused on developing countries, their study uses a qualitative approach to analyze these factors. Key findings reveal that women are driven by financial independence and self-fulfilment but face significant barriers, including gender discrimination, limited access to finance, and work-family conflicts. Success factors identified include strong family support, effective networking, and personal attributes like commitment and managerial skills. External support from policies and financial institutions also plays a crucial role in their entrepreneurial success.

While existing literature on women entrepreneurship in national and international levels, extensively covers motivations, challenges and success factors, there remains a notable gap in analysing the performance of MSMEs in Indian economy in current years. There is also dearth in the literature assessing the participation of women entrepreneurs the development of MSME sector.

3. Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the present study are the following:

i. To analyse the performance of MSME sector in India.

ii. To assess the participation of women entrepreneurs in MSME sector.

4. Data & Methodology

This is a descriptive study, also an analytical one. The entire analysis is based on the secondary data collected from various annual reports of the MSME sector and government websites.

5. Research Findings

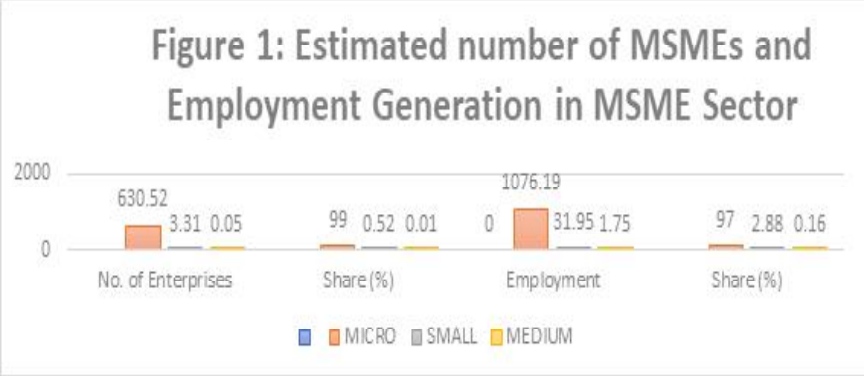
5.1 Performance of MSME sector in India

The GDP, exports and employment generated by micro, small and medium-sized businesses have expanded dramatically over time. The MSME sector has experienced significant growth, which has reduced regional imbalances and the unequal distribution of wealth and income. The information gathered from the 73rd National Sample Survey, which was carried out in 2015–16, is shown in Table 1 and depicted by Figure 1.

Table 1: Estimated number of MSMEs and Employment Generation in MSME Sector

SECTOR	No. of Enterprises	Share (%)	Employment (in lakh)	Share (%)
MICRO	630.52	99	1076.19	97
SMALL	3.31	0.52	31.95	2.88
MEDIUM	0.05	0.01	1.75	0.16
Total	633.88	100	1109.89	100

Source: *MSME Annual Report 2022-23*



The NSS 73rd round reports a total of 633.88 lakh MSMEs, including 630.52 lakh micro, 3.31 lakh small, and 0.05 lakh medium enterprises. MSMEs have generated 11.10 crore jobs, with micro enterprises employing 1076.19 lakh people, while small and medium enterprises created 31.95 lakh and 1.75 lakh jobs, respectively. Micro enterprises, making up 99% of MSMEs, contribute to over 97% of the sector's employment. Within the MSME sector, "manufacturing" and "trade" dominate, comprising 196.65 lakh and 230.35 lakh enterprises, employing 360.41 lakh and 387.18 lakh people, respectively. The "other services" sector includes 206.85 lakh enterprises employing 362.22 lakh, while electricity enterprises are minimal, with only 0.03 lakh employing 0.07 lakh people.

5.2 Women Entrepreneurs in MSMEs in India

From the last few decades women entrepreneurs has achieved a good recognition in India. Their contribution is increasing in Indian economy's growth and development. In the MSME sector also female entrepreneurs' contribution has increased in the last few years.

Table No. 2: Percentage distribution of MSMEs owned by Male and Female entrepreneurs

CATEGORY	MALE	FEMALE
MICRO	79.56	20.44
SMALL	94.74	5.26
MEDIUM	97.33	2.67
Total	79.63	20.37

Source: *MSME Annual Report 2022-23*

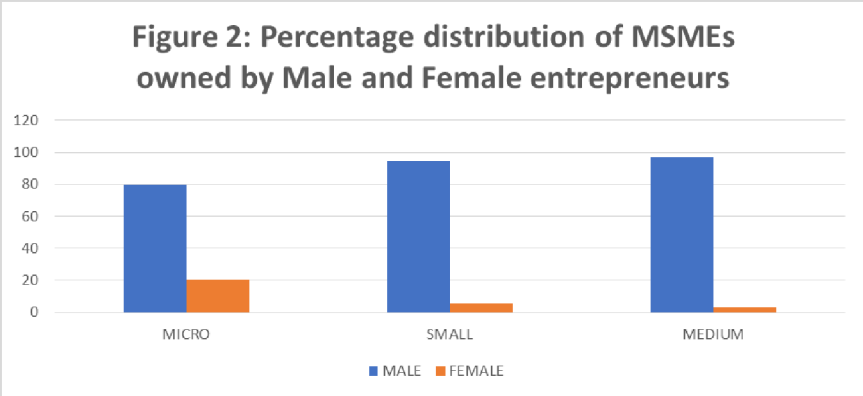


Table 2 & Figure 2 illustrate the gender distribution of entrepreneurs in the MSME sector as per the NSS 73rd round. Male entrepreneurs dominate, owning 79.63% of MSMEs, while females own only 20.37%. Among micro enterprises, 79.56% are male-owned, and 20.44% are female-owned. Small enterprises show 94.74% male and 5.26% female ownership, whereas medium enterprises have 97.33% male and 2.67% female owners. Within the female category, women primarily own micro enterprises and have the least presence in medium enterprises. This indicates that as enterprise size increases, the proportion of women entrepreneurs decreases.

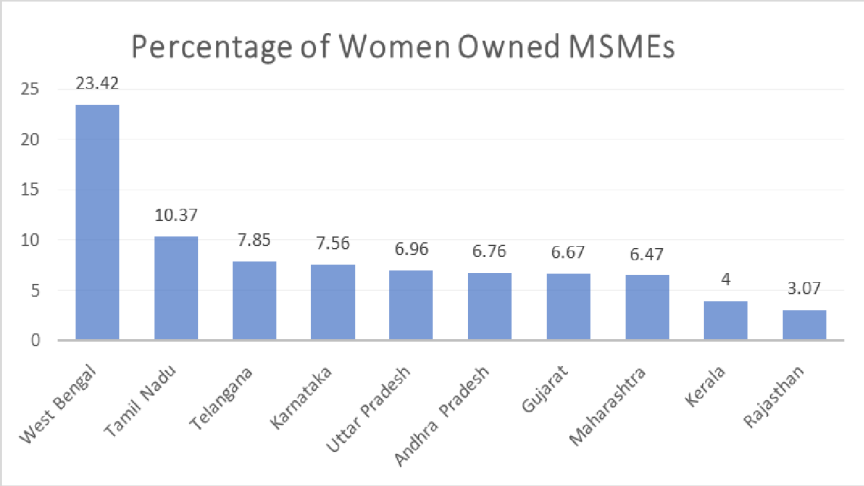
5.3 Top 10 States with Highest Women MSME Entrepreneurs

The results of the 73rd National Sample Survey conducted in 2015-16 shows that in the MSME sector 79.63% are the male owned enterprises whereas there are only 20.37% female owned MSMEs as a whole. Table No 3 shows the share of female entrepreneurs in MSME in the top 10 states.

Table No. 3: Top 10 States with Highest Percentage of Women Owned MSMEs

STATE	% SHARE
West Bengal	23.42
Tamil Nadu	10.37
Telangana	7.85
Karnataka	7.56
Uttar Pradesh	6.96
Andhra Pradesh	6.76
Gujarat	6.67
Maharashtra	6.47
Kerala	4
Rajasthan	3.07

Source: *MSME Annual Report 2022-23*



West Bengal leads in female-owned MSMEs, accounting for 23.42% of the total, while Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep have the lowest shares at 0.01% and 0%, respectively. Among the top 10 states for women-led MSMEs, five are from South India: Tamil Nadu (10.37%), Telangana (7.85%), Karnataka (7.56%), Andhra Pradesh (6.76%), and Kerala (4%). This concentration suggests that South India provides a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs to establish and grow their businesses.

6. Conclusion

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a key role in driving India's economic development, encouraging greater participation of women entrepreneurs in the sector. According to the NSS 73rd round, India has 633.88 lakh MSMEs, of which 79.63% are owned by men and 20.37% by women. West Bengal leads with the highest share of female entrepreneurs at 23.42%. These figures highlight the need for greater efforts to enhance women's participation. The government is working toward this goal through various schemes, skill development programs, policies, and financial support. However, achieving gender parity in the MSME sector and beyond remains a distant goal.

Reference

1. Bhat, S. A. and Singh, S. (2020) "Role of MSMEs in social and economic development in India", *Studies in Indian Place Names,* vol. 40, no. 50, pp. 1-11.

2. Chakraborty, A. (2020) "A Comparative Analysis of Women Entrepreneurship Vs Men Entrepreneurship in West Bengal", *RESEARCH REVIEW International Journal of Multidisciplinary*, vol. 5, no. 8, pp. 233-7.
3. Dangi, N. (2014) "Women entrepreneurship and growth and performance of MSMEs in India", *International Journal*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 174-182.
4. De, N. and Mondal, T. (2018) "Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and Potential Women Entrepreneurs for Inclusive Growth in India", *International Journal of Research in Management*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 95-107.
5. Fazalbhoy, S. (2014) "Women entrepreneurship as the way for economic development", *Annual Research Journal of Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies* , vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 117- 127.
6. Garg, S. and Agarwal, P. (2017) "Problems and prospects of woman entrepreneurship–a review of literature", *IOSR Journal of Business and Management,* vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 55-60.
7. Ghosh, S., & Pachori, S. (2022). "Role of women entrepreneurs of MSME sector for socioeconomic & regional development of Hooghly District, West Bengal", *International Journal of Health Sciences*, vol. 6(S2), pp. 5676–5684.
8. Goswami, A. and Darshan S. (2024) "Empowerment of Women Entrepreneur: The Evolving and Involving Role of Ministry of MSME", SPAST Reports, vol. 1, no. 1.
9. Government of India Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Sectoral Paper on MSME in West Bengal – 2022-23. www.msme.gov.in.
10. Gupta, M., and Basak, R. (2016) "Commercial banks finance and economic empowerment in women-owned micro and small enterprises in India-A study of engineering sector in Howrah, West Bengal", *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Management*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp.14-26.
11. Kumar, Y. (2016). "Women participation in Indian MSMEs in globalized era", *International Journal of Information, Business and Management* vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 277.
12. Kumari, R. L. and Venkatesh, J. (2018) "A Case Study on Women Entrepreneurship and the Opportunity to Promote India's Development", *International Journal of Human Resource Management and Research* (IJHRMR), vol. 8 no. 5, pp. 27-34.
13. Mukherjee, R. (2022). Women entrepreneur's boutique business in sub-urban Kolkata amidst the Corona pandemic: The socio-economic determinants, challenges encountered, & survival strategies. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, vol. 6, no. 6, pp. 7486-7495.
14. Patel, A. and Rewadikar, B. (2023). "An Analysis of Role of Women Entrepreneurs in MSME Sector in India", *Int. J. Adv. Res.* 12(01), 532-539.

15. Rajan, S. and Panicker, S. (2020) "The concept of entrepreneurial ability-evidence from women in MSMEs of Karnataka state", *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business,* vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 1-32.
16. Sectoral Paper on MSME in West Bengal – 2022-23 by NABARD, WB
17. Shoma and Dilruba, C. (2019) "Financing female entrepreneurs in cottage, micro, small, and medium enterprises: Evidence from the financial sector in Bangladesh 2010–2018", *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies, vol* 6, no. 3, pp. 397-416.
18. Singh, A. D. and Raina M. (2013) "Women entrepreneurs in micro, small and medium enterprises", *International Journal of Management and Social Sciences Research*, vol. 2, no. 8, pp. 4-8.
19. Subbarayudu, C. and Rao, C. S. (2021) "Policies and schemes for women entrepreneurs in India", *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews* vol. 8, no.1, pp. 213-225.
20. Uddin, M. (2021) "Understanding MSME-owned women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh: exploring motives, challenges, and success factors", *International Journal of Critical Accounting*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 107-128.

25

Empowering Women, Enhancing Livelihoods: A Study on Economic Empowerment via Self-Help Groups in South 24 Parganas, Canning, Block-1, West Bengal.

Nibedita Mallick

Abstract

The effect of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) on women's economic empowerment in South 24 Parganas, Canning Block-1, West Bengal, is investigated in this study. With a mixed-methods strategy that included a primary survey and data gathered from the government website NRLM.in, we were able to randomly select 150 SHGs from this specific block, yielding a total of 300 respondents. The impact of SHG participation on women's income, savings, decision-making authority, and social networks is examined in this study. In this study, women's economic empowerment is greatly strengthened by SHG membership, which results in better livelihoods and more autonomy. According to the study, saving is the key entry point for self-help groups, and the members feel empowered because joining the group has undoubtedly helped the impoverished who were previously unable to save develop the habit of saving regularly. However, the ability to save does not significantly increase with the length of time spent in the groups. Internal lending is another crucial aspect of SHGs. Older SHGs with greater monthly incomes and per capita incomes have a stronger lending profile when it comes to internal lending, where the amount of deposit determines the loan amount. The study highlights the potential of SHGs as a viable strategy for promoting women's economic empowerment and reducing poverty. The research contributes to the existing literature on women's empowerment and SHGs, informing policy and practice for sustainable development.

Keywords: *Self-Help Groups (SHGs), economic empowerment, saving regularly, Internal lending, loan amount, sustainable development*

Introduction:

The effect of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) on women's economic empowerment in South 24 Parganas, Canning Block-1, West Bengal, is investigated in this study. With a mixed-methods strategy that included a primary survey and data gathered from the government website NRLM.in, we were able to randomly select 150 SHGs from this specific block, yielding a total of 300 respondents. The impact of SHG participation on women's income, savings, decision-making authority, and social networks is examined in this study. In this study, women's economic empowerment is greatly strengthened by SHG membership, which results in better livelihoods and more autonomy. According to the study, saving is the key entry point for self-help groups, and the members feel empowered because joining the group has undoubtedly helped the impoverished who were previously unable to save develop the habit of saving regularly.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The study highlights the potential of SHGs as a viable strategy for promoting women's economic empowerment and reducing poverty. The research contributes to the existing literature on women's empowerment and SHGs, informing policy and practice for sustainable development.

1. Lower poverty through income, savings, and credit opportunities.
2. Empower women via economic conditions, self-assurance, and leadership
3. Through employment creation and entrepreneurship, it can help stimulate local economies.
4. It can also maximise access to education and healthcare.

   By exploring SHGs, this study can inform health, education, policies and initiatives that energize communities and promote sustainable development.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

Researchers have studied in several ways to find out the significant role of Self Help Groups (SHGs) in India, they are also focusing on their impact on women's empowerment, economic autonomy, and social development. Findings are as follows :

i) In this study we can find that SHGs face challenges in marketing their existing product and can not get an opportunity to market their new launching product, when markets are totally unknown. Therefore, adapting to a new market is really difficult for them. Now it can be a challenge for SHG Group members. (**Mishra, 2011**)

ii) In this research SHGs need to be established and also developed for an upcoming smart society. Afterwards they can become an empowering weapon for our civilized society. (**Haridas, 2013**)

iii) There are several Government programs like IRDP, TRYSEM, and DWCRA which can reduce poverty and it also can enhance the thought of women who can play a significant role in society through SHGs.

iv) Study shows that in Tamil Nadu, the state government is very supportive of the empowerment of women in society and wants to establish a brand identity in the market.(**Narasimhan, 2012)**

v) Study shows that Women in SHGs face different kinds of household and their family demands, there are time constraints to get proper training and also proper management of finance. (**Niogay, 2015)**

vi) Here we see that SHGs have promoted women's autonomy , economic freedom, and political participation (**Reddy, 2010; Rini Roberts, 2011)**

vii) The researcher finds that SHGs have contributed to rural entrepreneurship, they are utilizing their local skills and several resources available surround them. (**Anjali Sharma, 2017)**

viii) Here we observe that entrepreneurship which is typically microfinance based has enabled women to contribute their savings towards household finances, though they can take an active role of decision making in the society. (**Srivastava, 2005)**

Overall, SHGs have positively impacted women's lives, but some of the challenges they are facing till now in society further research is needed to address these issues.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

This study aims to:

1. Examine how Self Help Groups (SHGs) contribute to the economic empowerment of their members towards the society.
2. Inquire the effects of SHGs on the overall well-being and quality of life of community members.
3. Identify the different obstacles and limitations which are faced by several SHGs and their existing members.
4. Scrutinize the impact of SHGs on encouraging gender equality and empowering women in our society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

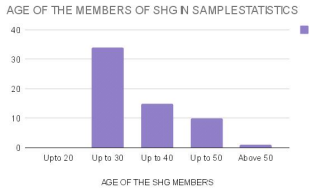
In this study, **300** women are personally interviewed from **150 SHGs** of the village from **Canning Block I**, **South 24 Parganas, and West Bengal**. Focus group discussion has been used as an important designing research method. Women's economic empowerment is viewed as the decision making power on the selected indicators likely i) use of the loan, ii) use of income from credit utilization in income generating activities, iii) repayment of the loan. According to the following metrics, social empowerment is defined as social mobility, awareness, and skill development. i) participation in group meetings; ii) attendance at panchayat and block level cluster and federation meetings; iii) knowledge of various government programs; iv) involvement in various social activities; v) learning how to keep group meeting accounts and record books; and vi) learning how to manage credit and transactions. to identify the key elements influencing women's economic decision-making authority. The following factors have been chosen for this purpose: i) age, ii) education, iii) head of the family, iv) length of time spent in SHGs, v) kind of credit utilisation, and vi) operation of income generating activities (IGA).

DATA

- Primary data
- Secondary data

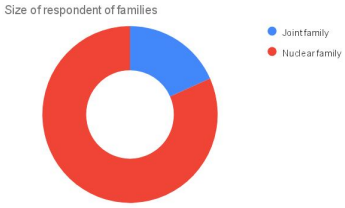
DATA PRESENTATION

1: Nature of age among the SHG members in Sample statistics:



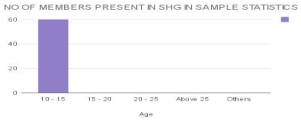
Age of the SHGs members	300	%
Upto 20	0	0
Up to 30	170	56.67
Up to 40	75	25
Up to 50	50	16.67
Above 50	05	1.66

2: Size of respondent's family:



Family size	No of respondent 300	%
Joint family	55	18.33
Nuclear family	245	81.67

3. No of Members present among the each SHG in Sample statistics



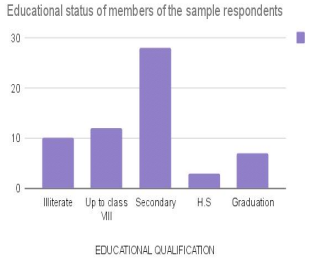
No of members in your SHG group	300	%
10 - 15	300	100
15 - 20	00	0
20 - 25	00	0
Above 25	00	0
Others	00	0

4. No of years associated with the SHG

How long have you been the SHG	300	%
Less than 1 year	0	0
Less than 2 years	155	51.67
Less than 5 years	145	48.33
Less than 10 years	0	0
More than 10 years	0	0

5. Educational status of members of the sample respondents.

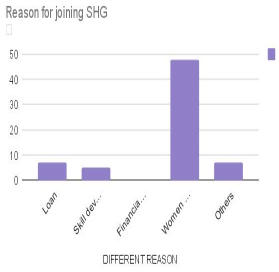
Educational status No of respondent 300 % 100



Educational status	No of respondent 300	% 100
Illiterate	50	16.67
Up to class VIII	60	20
Secondary	140	46.67
H.S	15	5
Graduation	35	11.66

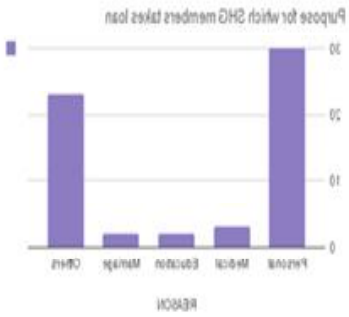
6. Reason for joining SHG

6. Reason for joining SHG



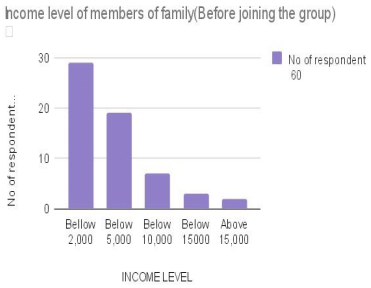
Reason	No of respondent 300	% 100
Loan	35	11.67
Skill development	25	8.33
Financial awareness	0	0
Women empowerment	240	80
Others	0	0

7 . Purpose for which SHG members take loan.



Reason	No of respondent 300	% 100
Personal	150	50
Medical	15	5
Education	10	3.33
Marriage	10	3.33
Others	115	38.34

8. Income level of members of family (Before joining the group)

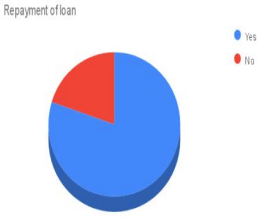


Reason	No of respondent 300	% 100
Bellow 2,000	145	48.33
Below 5,000	95	31.67
Below 10,000	35	11.67
Below 15000	15	5
Above 15,000	10	3.33

9. Savings levels of members of family (after joining the group)

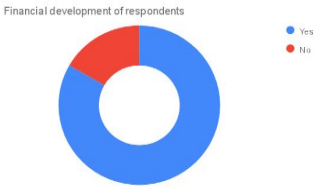
Monthly Savings	No of respondent 300	% 100
0	05	1.67
Below 200	130	43.33
Below 500	130	43.33
Below 1000	20	6.67
Above 1,000	15	5

10. Repayment of loan



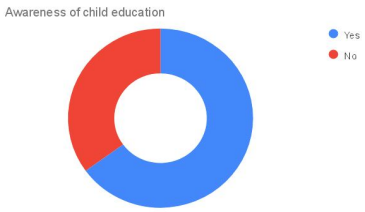
Payment of loan	No of respondent 300	%
Yes	240	80
No	60	20

11. Financial development of respondents



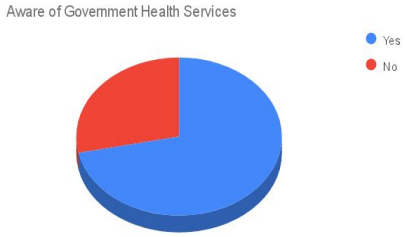
Financial Empowerment	No of respondent 300	%
Yes	250	83.33
No	50	16.67

12. Aware of child education



Child education	No of respondent 300	% 100
Yes	195	65
No	105	35

13. Aware of Government Health Services



Health services	No of respondent 300	% 100
Yes	215	71.67
No	85	28.33

LIMITATIONS OF SHGS:

i) Account keeping is an important aspect of every SHG. Our study shows that since the members of Self Help Groups are either illiterate or have little education, they depend upon others to maintain accounts.

ii) Many Self Help Groups lack clear vision, mission and programmes.

iii) Majority respondents viewed that there is a lack of technical education with regard to income generating activities.

CHALLENGES OF SHGS:

i) Do our responding swear award of the banking procedures to get credit, they failed that the procedures are complicated and time consuming. Hence, the procedures and formalities of banks should be made simpler and the required documents should be made available in regional language.

ii) There is an urgent need to popularize the successful stories of self-help groups from varied backgrounds through media or by block level or Panchayat level office. It will encourage women. Also successful self-help groups need to be encouraged through awards and attractive incentives.

iii) Better marketing facilities are fundamental to any improvement in the sustainability of self-help groups. Therefore, efforts should be made to provide marketing facilities for all self-help groups existing in different regions of India.

iv) Ultimately the only effective way to expand the small space which the existing structures provide to self-help groups is to federate them at different tiers. This will enable the group to organize themselves to overcome the material state of helplessness. Efforts should be made to form a co-operative for self-help groups to work as production and distribution centers.

v) The only effective way to achieve sustainability of the small informal groups is to formal group in panchayat Raj institutions and self-help Groups for women empowerment.

Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensuring the long-term success and impact of SHGs.

CONCLUSION:

Self-help groups are quickly becoming effective social tools for the socioeconomic empowerment of India's rural impoverished women, notwithstanding any obstacles. Through beneficial effects on income, savings, and self-confidence, they have frequently improved the social and economic circumstances of their members. By helping women become more articulate, self-help groups are a great way to get them out of the house. In summary, although self-help groups are small organisations, they have a big influence. Through these groups, women can contribute positively in an institutionally

controlled environment. By using the platform provided by self-help groups, it is crucial to empower women to break free from the patriarchal societal bondage and take part in government as citizens, voters, and political leaders. Rural India would change if all the stakeholders in rural development, including civil society, self-help groups, and panchayat raj institutions, worked together to create a synergy. This would give every disempowered Indian the ability to make decisions and take charge of their lives.

References

1. *Amit Roy and Suhrita Chakrabarty (2010): Evaluation of Self-Help Groups: An Empirical Investigation in India, Lambert Academic Publishing*
2. Amrita Bahattacharjee & Prankrisna Pal (2012-13): Self-Help Groups and Women's Employment - A Study in North 24 Parganas District, West Bengal, Vidyasagar University Journal of Economics, Vol. 17
3. Chettri,D. (2012): Empowering Women of Rural Kalimpong through Self Help group, Kolkata Realers Service (151-157).
4. Deininger,K & Liu,Y. (2009): Term Economic Impacts Of Self Help Group in India, World Bank Development Research Group Sustainable Development Team, Policy Research Working Paper Series-4886
5. Dilip Rath- Chairman NDDB (2017): Dairying in West Bengal- A Statistical Profile 2017- NationalDairy Development Board (NDDB), Anand, Gujrat.
6. Dipti Kr Chakravorti (2012-13): The Role of Self Help Group (SHG) in Poverty Alleviation in RuralWest Bengal: A Study on Some Selected District.
7. Dr.Harsh Kumar Bhanwala- Chairman NABARD (2017-18): Status of Microfinance in India.
8. Hashemi, S,M & Schuler,S,R.(1996): Rural Credit Programs and Women s Empowerment in Bangala Desh, World Developent.
9. Holvoet,N. (2005): The Impact of Micro finance on Decision Making Agency.-Evidence from SouthIndia. Development and Changes,Vol-36.
10. Paramita Manarjee, Vasimraja Sayed & Sheena Abraham (2010): Self Help Group: A Pathway TowardsCredit and Economic Empowerment of Women. International Journal of Advanced Research inManagement (IJARM) vol-7,Issue-1 (13-19).
11. Rabin Das (2015): Emergence and Activities of Self Help Group (SHG)
12. Sinha,F. (2006): Self Help Groups in India: A study on the Lights and Shades. Noida and Hyderabad:APMAS & EDA Rural System.
13. West Bengal Tribal Development Co-operative Corporation Ltd (WBTDCC)- Kolkata , Annual Report.

14. The Hindu- Business line
www.oneindia.com
www.eshakti.nabard.org
www.craftsvilla.com
www.gktoday.in
www.google.com

26

Vivekananda's Vision of Empowerment for Women and the Impact of India's SHG (Self-Help Group) Movement

Md Ajmal Hoque

Abstract:

In Indian society, issues such as dowry, sexual violence, abuse, and wage discrimination pose significant obstacles to women's empowerment. Exploring this pressing issue through the lens of Vivekananda uncovers a distinctive viewpoint on women's epowerment. Highlighting the crucial role that women play in society, he argued that true national progress is intrinsically tied to the upliftment of women. Advocating for educational opportunities, he believed that empowering women through education would enable them to participate fully in all aspects of life, thereby advancing the nation as a whole.

In many rural areas, women face significant barriers to economic independence and social empowerment due to limited access to resources, education, and opportunities. Self-help groups (SHGs) have emerged as a powerful tool to bridge this gap, rooted in the principle of 'by the women, of the women, and for the women.' These groups not only foster financial independence but also act as a platform for social and psychological support. By fostering self-employment opportunities, they empower women who may lack their assets, helping them to achieve greater independence and self sufficiency. This paper will explore how India's Self-Help Group (SHG) movement, aligns with Swami Vivekananda's vision of women's independence and self-sufficiency. Vivekananda believed that economic empowerment was central to the emancipation of women, advocating for financial independence as a pathway to personal dignity and broader social reform. Since its inception in the 1980s, the SHG movement has empowered rural women by providing financial literacy, savings opportunities, access to microfinance loans, and platforms for entrepreneurial growth. In essence,

India's SHG movement embodies Swami Vivekananda's vision of women's empowerment by fostering economic independence and social upliftment, crucial for national progress.

Keywords- *Women empowerment, Economic independence, Swami Vivekananda, Self-help group.*

Introduction:

Against the backdrop of the American War of Independence and the French Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft's book A Vindication of the Rights of Women was published in 1792, and the demand for equal rights for women was first raised. In this book, she argued that as rational human beings, women should have the same freedoms and rights as men. Granting these rights would benefit not only women but society as a whole, given that women make up half of its population. John Stuart Mill's book The Subjection of Women (1869) echoes the same ideas. In the mid-nineteenth century,

various movements began to take place in Europe and the United States to demand women's suffrage in entering and establishing public life, in which the movement to obtain voting rights is particularly noteworthy, marking the significant first step towards women's empowerment. Before delving deeper into the topic, let's first explore what women's empowerment truly means and why it has become a pressing need in today's world.

Women empowerment involves enabling women to take control of their lives, make decisions, and access opportunities that allow them to thrive personally, professionally, socially, economically, and politically. Rooted in inequality, it seeks to grant women the same rights, resources, and opportunities as men by breaking down societal and cultural barriers. Key components include education, financial independence, equal representation in leadership, and autonomy over their bodies. By creating an environment free from discrimination and violence, empowering women not only benefits them individually but also fosters stronger, more innovative communities and economies. The World Economic Forum in their annual report titled 'The global gender gap report 2016' analyzed the position of women in 144 countries of the world in terms of health, education,Economic participation, and political representation and derived that at the current pace, women would have to wait another 170 years to achieve equal rights. Another report published by the United Nations in the year 1980 states, "Women constitute half of the world's population,

perform nearly two-thirds of its work hours, receive one-tenth of the world income, and own less than onehundredth of the world property". These reports starkly illustrate the persistent discrimination women face today and emphasize the urgent need to address these inequalities.

Moving on to Bengal and its efforts toward women's empowerment, the first step towards women's empowerment came during the Renaissance period. Many efforts have been made by various influential figures to empower women, with Swami Vivekananda being one of them. His idea of women empowerment is unique. In this article, we will focus on Vivekananda's vision of empowerment for women and the impact of the SHGs (Self Help Groups) movement.

Position of women in ancient Indian society:

There are conflicting views regarding the status of women in India. The Hindu Smriti Shastras and Puranas offer differing perspectives on women; in some instances, women are elevated to the status of a Goddess, while in others, they are depicted negatively—as the "gate to hell" or simply as instruments for bearing sons. The position of women in Indian Muslim society is equally deplorable,

with traditional practices and interpretations of religious texts often restricting their rights and freedoms. In Muslim society, women are not considered equal to men. The Holy Qur'an clearly states that women should be subservient to men. Men are superior to women (Quran 4:34) . In Islamic ideology, Allah is described as formless and there is no mention of Allah's gender. Yet Allah is referred to as "He". In addition to India's communal divide, various other differences have emerged, preventing a unified movement for women's rights. As a result, the transformation of women's status in the socio-economic realm has not achieved significant success. Even now, in various parts of the country, women have to campaign to enter places of worship. Therefore, ending discrimination against women and finding ways to achieve equal rights is socially and politically very important and relevant.

Indian women's society and Vivekananda :

When Vivekananda was born, Indian society was steeped in evil practices, superstitions, and bigotry.

In this context, he called upon Indian youth to work towards the development of Indian culture. After observing the position of women in America, Swamiji found the plight of Indian women even more unbearable. He recognized the gap between theory and practice regarding women's status in Hindu society and highlighted their suffering in his letters and speeches. In this context, he told Saratchandra Chakraborty that men in this country only condemn women without taking any steps to improve their situation. He believed that men had reduced women to mere child-bearers, confining them with restrictive rules and regulations. He saw that the so-called respectable elite men of the society disenfranchised women by depriving them of education, religion, wealth, and power and made women slaves to bear children.

Swami Vivekananda made several observations from this:

Firstly, Vivekananda considered the deprivation of the inherent right of women over their bodies as the primary cause of injustice, discrimination, and deprivation towards them.

Secondly, He considered the status or advancement of women as a necessary pre-condition for the overall development of society.

Finally, He blamed the patriarchy mainly for the plight of women in society.

Vivekananda on the limitations of the then-Indian initiative on women's emancipation :

Swami Vivekananda was eager to find a way to remedy the plight of Indian women. However Indian society at that time lacked enough interest and initiative among Indian men for women's emancipation. Vivekananda was also skeptical about the practical effectiveness of the initiatives undertaken by the various social reforms.

Firstly, According to Swami Vivekananda, these initiatives were only focused on solving the problems of the upper strata of the society. They were out of touch with the lives and interests of most marginalized women. For him, social reform meant more than just widow marriage and women's freedom. For him, social reform should be comprehensive and should touch everyone.

Secondly, These initiatives were aimed at imitating Western influences, forgetting the ideals of Indian society, and abandoning its own values. He said that there is a difference between the objectives

of Indian and Western societies, so imitating each other would not be beneficial.

Finally, Men were the main and women were secondary in planning, directing, and implementing these initiatives for women's liberation and empowerment.

Vivekananda on the empowerment of Indian women:

Swami Vivekananda's views on the empowerment and emancipation of women were deeply intertwined with his spiritual beliefs and social reform ideals. He recognized the inherent strength, potential, and divinity of women, advocating for their active participation in all aspects of life.

Vivekananda's main suggestion for the empowerment of Indian women was the spread of education among them. He talks about empowering women to solve their problems, on their own. Although the initiative to promote women's education had been underway in India, particularly in Bengal, long before Swamiji, his vision on this issue carried a unique perspective. Swamiji's approach to women's education was not just about imparting knowledge, but about empowering women to realize their inherent strength and potential. Let’s explore his views in more depth:

1. The Divine Power of Women

Vivekananda regarded women as embodiments of divine energy. He often invoked the concept of Shakti (divine power), viewing women as the manifestation of this supreme force. In his speech at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, he famously said, "The best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women." For Vivekananda, the empowerment of women was not just a social or political issue, but a spiritual imperative. He saw the elevation of women as the key to the moral and spiritual regeneration of society. According to him, the mother figure in Indian culture was synonymous with divinity, and when women were uplifted, the nation itself would be spiritually rejuvenated.

2. Women’s Role in National Awakening

Vivekananda believed that the social, moral, and political progress of any nation was directly tied to the condition of its women. For him, national strength could not be achieved without the upliftment of women. He stressed that men and women must rise together for

society to achieve its highest potential. In his view, the empowerment of women would lead to the social and moral regeneration of society. In a letter to his brother, Vivekananda wrote, "The future of India lies in the hands of her women. Educate them, and you will have a nation full of strength and morality."

3. Education and Equality

Vivekananda was a strong proponent of women's education, which he saw as the foundation of their empowerment. He argued that education would free women from ignorance and superstitions that kept them in subjugation. In his speeches and writings, Vivekananda stated that ignorance was the root cause of women's oppression, and education was the most effective means to bring them out of the darkness of societal subjugation. He criticized the lack of educational opportunities for women, particularly in traditional Hindu society, and stressed that every woman should have the same opportunities as men to learn and grow.

He advocated not only for formal education but for the education of the mind, spirit, and character.

For Vivekananda, true education was not merely the acquisition of knowledge but the development of one's character, self-reliance, and inner strength. He wanted women to be educated not just to fit into the existing societal structures, but to challenge, reshape, and uplift those structures.

4. Women in Family and Society

Vivekananda's vision of women's role was not confined to the domestic sphere, but he also recognized the importance of the home and family in shaping the values of a society. However, he emphasized that women should not be restricted to domestic duties alone. He promoted the idea of women as moral guardians and educators within the family. He stated that when women were empowered with education and freedom, they would instill the same virtues in the next generation.

He also recognized that women's contribution to social reform was crucial. Swami Vivekananda encouraged women to step out of their traditional roles and participate in public service, social welfare, and reform movements. He believed that women had an essential role to play in the revitalization of society, both in terms of spiritual strength and social progress. He encouraged

women to become involved in social activism, advocating for causes such as the abolition of child marriage, the improvement of the status of widows, and the protection of women's rights.

5. Challenging Social Norms and Oppression

Vivekananda was also critical of the oppressive customs and traditions that restricted women's freedoms, especially those rooted in rigid interpretations of religion and culture. He denounced practices such as child marriage, purdah (veil), and the subjugation of widows, and advocated for the abolition of such customs. In a speech at the Parliament of Religions, Vivekananda stated: "The idea of woman's inferiority is rooted in a warped, ignorant interpretation of both religion and history." He wanted to break the chains that had been imposed on women and urged society to understand that their true power lay in their freedom.

He also emphasized that women should not be seen as dependent on men or as their subordinates.

Instead, they should be viewed as equals, capable of making their own choices and achieving their potential. In his words, "The woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture, and transform."

6. Self-Reliance and Inner Strength

One of the core principles of Vivekananda's philosophy was self-reliance, and he consistently applied this principle to women. He wanted women to realize their strength, self-worth, and capabilities. He believed that women should never wait for external validation but should develop a sense of inner confidence and strength to overcome challenges. He encouraged women to be strong, assertive, and independent, and not to rely on others to define their worth or dictate their life choices.

Vivekananda saw strength in women not just as physical, but as emotional, mental, and spiritual strength. He wanted women to recognize their inherent divinity and power, and to be fearless in their pursuit of knowledge, spiritual development, and social reform.

7. Women's Leadership

Swami Vivekananda also spoke of the importance of women's leadership in guiding society towards a better future. He believed that women had an intuitive wisdom and compassion that could inspire

profound social and spiritual change. He often cited the example of women saints, philosophers, and leaders throughout history, and urged women to look to such examples as a source of inspiration.

He believed that the future of a society could be built on the moral and spiritual strength of women.

In this context, Vivekananda's vision for women was revolutionary for his time. He didn't just want women to emancipate themselves from social restrictions; he wanted them to take an active role in transforming society, culture, and spirituality.

Self-Help Groups

A Self-Help Group (SHG) is a group of 10-20 members from similar socio-economic backgrounds, often in rural areas, who meet regularly to discuss collective concerns, share experiences, and support each other. SHGs focus on collective efforts, such as pooling savings, taking loans, starting businesses, and addressing social issues. They contribute to a common fund for loans.

SHGs are democratic organizations with members actively involved in decision-making. They elect leaders and meet regularly to ensure transparency. Members contribute to the group's savings pool, which is used to provide loans at lower interest rates for income-generating activities, education, and health emergencies. SHGs also facilitate capacity-building through training on financial management, entrepreneurship, health, hygiene, and legal rights, sometimes collaborating with local governments and NGOs.

Empowerment through SHGs:

SHGs empower women through economic empowerment, providing access to credit and savings, enabling women to start small businesses, and promoting entrepreneurial skills. They also offer training programs in financial literacy, small business management, and marketing, enhancing women's ability to manage their businesses effectively, reducing poverty, and promoting financial independence in communities often excluded from formal banking systems.SHGs offer women a social platform, enhancing their sense of community and self-worth. They build strong networks of mutual support, providing emotional and social support during personal challenges. As women earn independently, their social status improves, leading to increased respect and influence. SHGs also challenge traditional gender roles, promoting gender equality.SHGs empower women by

empowering them to participate in political processes, voice their rights, and develop leadership skills. They collaborate with local governments to improve services like healthcare and education, influencing policy decisions. SHGs also serve as platforms for women to advocate for policy changes, addressing issues like domestic violence and child marriage. SHGs provide psychological benefits for women, including increased confidence, social isolation, and awareness of rights. Women's participation in SHGs boosts self-esteem, helps overcome isolation, and promotes a sense of belonging. They also raise awareness about women's legal rights, health, and safety, enhancing their autonomy and decision-making abilities.

Similarity between Vivekananda's idea of women empowerment and women empowerment through SHGs:

Both Swami Vivekananda's views on women empowerment and the empowerment of women through self-help groups (SHGs) share a common underlying theme of promoting self-reliance, selfrespect, and active participation in society, though they come from different contexts and approaches.

1. Self-Reliance and Self-Respect:

Vivekananda emphasized the importance of self-respect and self-reliance for women. He believed that women should not be dependent on others but should have the confidence and ability to stand on their own. He said that women should be treated with dignity, as they have the potential to be powerful agents of change in society. According to him, women should be made so self-reliant that they can solve their problems.

Self-help groups similarly focus on fostering self-reliance among women by providing them with financial independence, decision-making power, and leadership roles within their communities. SHGs encourage women to pool their resources, work collaboratively, and gain the skills to manage f inances, thereby promoting empowerment.

2. Education and Knowledge:

Vivekananda stressed that women should be educated and equipped with knowledge so they could contribute to society in meaningful ways. He considered education to be a fundamental tool for women’s empowerment. He strongly advocated for women's education, believing that only through education could women unlock their true potential and contribute meaningfully to society. His famous

quote, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved," underscores the transformative power of educating women.

Vivekananda's main suggestion for the empowerment of Indian women was the spread of education among them. He believed that the empowerment of women through education would not only uplift individual women but also improve the entire nation.

3. Community and Collective Strength:

Vivekananda also spoke about the collective power of women when united, and how women's strength lies in their ability to work together for common goals. He advocated for women's collective rise in society, especially in overcoming the obstacles posed by societal constraints. In a society as diverse as India, differences are observed in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, and regionalism.

Vivekananda called for all women to come together to overcome these differences. Because he knew that women's development and women's rights could be achieved through unity. Similarly, SHGs operate on the principle of collective effort, where women come together to support each other financially and socially, pooling resources to overcome poverty and improve their living conditions. These groups often become a space for mutual support and shared learning.

4. Breaking Social Constraints:

Vivekananda was critical of the societal norms that restricted women's freedom and participation in public life. He believed that true empowerment could only occur when women were freed from these limitations and allowed to follow their aspirations without being bound by patriarchal restrictions. He called for breaking the traditional constraints imposed on women by society and encouraged women to transcend the roles that were limiting their potential.

SHGs help women break free from social isolation and traditional constraints by enabling them to step into public spheres—whether through economic activities, leadership roles, or social advocacy—challenging the norms that often restrict their agency.SHGs help women challenge traditional roles and norms by encouraging them to engage in entrepreneurial activities, leadership, and social change, thereby breaking stereotypes about women's capabilities.

5. Reformist Approach:

Swami Vivekananda called for social reforms that would uplift women from the oppression they faced due to rigid cultural norms, superstition, and lack of education. He criticized the social practices that restricted women's participation in religious, social, and educational spheres. His vision included holistic empowerment, where women could take active roles in spiritual, social, and intellectual realms.

SHGs contribute to societal reform by challenging traditional gender roles. Women, through these groups, not only gain economic independence but also challenge patriarchal structures. By engaging in group activities such as savings, lending, and small business ventures, women in SHGs become more visible in public and economic spheres, which is often a direct challenge to societal norms that restrict women's mobility and autonomy.

6. Promotion of Leadership and Social Contribution:

Vivekananda viewed women as capable of leadership and saw them as spiritual and intellectual equals to men. He strongly advocated for women to become leaders within their families, communities, and in the wider national context. His vision was of a society where women could take on roles of governance and decision-making, contributing equally to the nation's progress. In order to promote women's education, Vivekananda thought of establishing a monastery for women, he said that men would have no direct role in running the monastery.

Within SHGs, women often take on leadership roles, managing group activities, organizing financial transactions, and even representing their groups in local governance or cooperative platforms. This allows women to build confidence, develop leadership skills, and take on roles that empower them to advocate for themselves and their communities. For many women, this is the first experience of

leading a collective effort, and it transforms their self-image and social standing.

7. Spiritual Empowerment:

For Vivekananda, the true empowerment of women was not just economic or educational; it was spiritual. He thought of making 'religion' primary rather than secondary in the spread of female

education. He encouraged women to realize their inherent divinity and power, suggesting that women's spiritual strength was a key to their overall empowerment. He famously said, "The world's greatest religion is to be good and do good."

Although SHGs primarily focus on economic and social empowerment, they often have a profound impact on women's inner lives. Many SHGs, especially in rural areas, incorporate aspects of community bonding, mutual respect, and shared values, which can foster spiritual and psychological empowerment. Women often gain a sense of spiritual or emotional upliftment by working together towards a common goal, experiencing solidarity, and realizing their inner strength.

8. Economic Independence:

Swami Vivekananda recognized that economic independence was a critical component of women's empowerment. While he focused on women's intellectual and spiritual development, he also understood that economic freedom provided women with the agency to make independent decisions, secure their future, and gain respect in society.

This is where SHGs are most directly aligned with Vivekananda's teachings. Through small loans, savings programs, and collective income-generating activities, SHGs help women achieve financial autonomy. Whether it is through micro-enterprises, craftwork, or agriculture, the economic independence provided by SHGs enables women to break free from cycles of poverty and dependence on male family members. Economic freedom, in turn, boosts women's self-esteem and their ability to make decisions in the household and society.

9. Challenging Patriarchy and Gender Norms

Vivekananda was an outspoken critic of the patriarchal structures that limited women's growth. He believed that women, as powerful and nurturing figures, had the potential to change society for the better. He saw the oppression of women as a major barrier to India's development and progress, and he advocated for the dismantling of the systemic discrimination women faced.

By creating spaces where women collaborate, make collective decisions, and develop leadership qualities, SHGs indirectly challenge patriarchal structures. Women in SHGs often overcome traditional gender barriers that restrict their participation in public life. When

women take control of finances, organize community activities, and become decision-makers, it often leads to shifts in family dynamics, giving them a stronger voice in household matters and in broader community issues.

10. Social Transformation and National Impact:

Vivekananda envisioned a society where women were not just liberated individuals but also agents of social change. He believed that the upliftment of women would lead to the upliftment of the entire nation. A strong, educated, and empowered woman could contribute to the welfare of her family, community, and the nation at large.

SHGs, while focused on local empowerment, have ripple effects that contribute to broader social change. As women become more economically stable and socially active, they influence other aspects of society, such as education, healthcare, and social justice. Their involvement in SHGs often translates into greater participation in social and political matters, making them key players in national development. The cumulative effect of widespread women's empowerment through SHGs is transformative not just at the individual level but for communities and even entire regions.

11)Strength and Inner Power:

He believed that women have immense inner strength and that their empowerment lies in recognizing and nurturing that strength. He famously said, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved." Women in SHGs often discover their strengths and capabilities through collaboration. The support system created within SHGs fosters confidence and leadership, helping women realize their power.

12)Overcoming Social Marginalization:

He was deeply concerned about the marginalization and oppression of women in society, especially in terms of caste, class, and social status. He urged society to provide women with the freedom to develop and rise above these constraints.

Many SHGs work specifically with marginalized women, such as those from lower castes, rural areas, or underprivileged communities. By giving these women a voice and access to resources, SHGs help them overcome social exclusion and discrimination, fostering a sense of equality and dignity.

Conclusion:

Swami Vivekananda's views on the empowerment and emancipation of women were progressive, spiritual, and deeply rooted in his vision for a strong, enlightened society. He advocated for women's education, spiritual growth, social reform, and self-reliance, and saw their full participation in society as essential to the progress of the nation. His emphasis on the divinity of women, combined with his call for social change, makes his thoughts on women not just relevant in the context of his time but also timeless. Vivekananda's teachings continue to inspire those who seek a more equal and just society, where both men and women are seen as equal partners in the development and evolution of humanity. The vision of women's empowerment through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) is rooted in fostering social, economic, and political independence for women and draws heavily from the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. By providing a platform for collective action, SHGs enable women to enhance their financial autonomy, improve their access to resources and services, and strengthen their decision-making roles within families and communities. The empowerment model promoted by

SHGs aims not only at poverty alleviation but also at challenging gender-based inequalities, fostering leadership skills, and enhancing self-confidence. In conclusion, SHGs play a crucial role in advancing women's rights, ensuring they are agents of change, capable of shaping their futures, and contributing to broader societal transformation. Through collective solidarity, women in SHGs create networks that not only support economic growth but also empower them socially and politically, making it a powerful tool for achieving gender equality and sustainable development.

REFERENCES

1. Mary Wollstonecraft, 2004 [1792], A vindication of the rights of women : With structures on Political and Moral Subjects, Mirium Brody (ed.), London: Penguin books, p.4
2. World Economic Forum, 2016, The Global Gender Gap Report 2016
3. Pravrajika Muktiprana, 2004, "Nari jagoron o Swami Vivekananda", Chintanayak Vivekananda, Swami Lokeshwarananda (Edited), Kolkata : Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Page 287- 288
4. Sen, Sandipan. 2018. Swami Vivekanander Samajik o Rajnoitik Bhabna: Ekti Samprotik Porjalochona, Kolkata: Udbodhon Karjalaya.

5. Pandey, Jatin and rani Roberts (2011): a study of empowerment of rural women through self-help group. Abhinav: national monthly referred journal of research in commerce and management. Vol.1. No. 8. 2011.
6. Ritu Jain (2003), "Socio-Economic Impact Through Self Help Groups", Yojana, Vol.47, No.7, Pp.11-12.
7. Shireesha. E, (2019), "Empowerment of Women through Self - Help Groups" - IJSDR, Volume 4, Issue 12.

27

Integrating Feminist and Empowerment Theory in Social Work Practice: A Framework for Promoting Social Justice and Equality

Dr. Sumita Saha

Abstract

This paper explores the integration of feminist and empowerment theory in social work practice, highlighting their potential to promote social justice and equality. Feminist theory recognizes the patriarchal roots of oppression, while empowerment theory focuses on building capacity and promoting participation. By combining these frameworks, social workers can develop a nuanced understanding of power dynamics and develop effective strategies for empowering marginalized communities. This paper discusses the application of feminist and empowerment theory in social work practice, including working with survivors of domestic violence, advocating for women's rights, and community development. The integration of these theories has the potential to transform social work practice, promoting a more just and equitable society.

Key words: *feminist theory, empowerment theory, social work practice, social justice, equality.*

Introduction:

Social work practice has long been committed to promoting social justice and equality, particularly for marginalized and oppressed populations. However, traditional social work approaches have often been criticized for perpetuating patriarchal and oppressive systems, rather than challenging them. In recent decades, feminist and empowerment theories have emerged as critical frameworks for social work practice, offering a more nuanced understanding of power

dynamics and social inequality. Feminist theory, with its emphasis on gender analysis and critique of patriarchal power structures, has been instrumental in highlighting the ways in which women and other marginalized groups are systematically oppressed and excluded from decision-making processes. Empowerment theory, with its focus on promoting individual and collective power and autonomy, has provided a framework for social workers to support marginalized communities in their struggles for social justice and equality. Despite the significance of these theories, their integration into social work practice remains limited. Many social workers continue to operate within traditional frameworks that prioritize individual pathology and adjustment, rather than addressing the broader structural and systemic issues that perpetuate social inequality. This presentation aims to provide a framework for integrating feminist and empowerment theories into social work practice, with a focus on promoting social justice and equality. By examining the key principles and concepts of these theories, and exploring their application in social work practice, this framework seeks to empower social workers to become more effective agents of social change, and to promote a more just and equitable society for all.

Objectives Of The Study:

1. Examine the tenets and ideas of empowerment and feminist theory.
2. To examine how feminist and empowerment theory is applied in social work practice., intervention, and evaluation procedures.
3. To determine the advantages and difficulties of incorporating empowerment and feminist thought into social work practice.
4. To provide a framework for incorporating feminist and empowerment theory into social work practice.
5. To investigate the consequences of incorporating feminist and empowerment theory into social work education, practice, and policy.

The Proposed Framework is Organized around four Key Principles:

1. Critiquing Patriarchal Power Structures: Social workers must critically examine the ways in which patriarchal power structures perpetuate oppression and social inequality. This

involves recognizing the ways in which societal institutions, policies, and practices perpetuate dominant power structures.

2. Promoting Empowerment and Self-Determination: Social workers must prioritize the empowerment and self-determination of marginalized communities, particularly women and girls. This involves building critical consciousness and social justice awareness, and promoting inclusive and equitable communities.
3. Fostering Critical Consciousness and Social Justice Awareness: Social workers must foster critical consciousness and social justice awareness among marginalized communities. This involves promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and social action.
4. Building Inclusive and Equitable Communities: Social workers must prioritize building inclusive and equitable communities that promote social justice and equality. This involves promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, and addressing the intersections of oppression and social inequality.

Implications for Social Work Practice, Education, and Research

The proposed framework has significant implications for social work practice, education, and research. Social workers must prioritize critiquing patriarchal power structures, promoting empowerment and self-determination, fostering critical consciousness and social justice awareness, and building inclusive and equitable communities. Social work education must prioritize teaching feminist and empowerment theory, and promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and social action. Social work research must prioritize studying the intersections of oppression and social inequality, and promoting inclusive and equitable communities.

FEMINIST THEORY:

Feminist theory emphasizes the importance of recognizing and challenging patriarchal power structures that perpetuate inequality and oppression. Key principles of feminist theory include:

Recognition of patriarchal oppression: Feminist theory acknowledges that women are oppressed by patriarchal systems that perpetuate inequality and discrimination

Importance of women's experiences: Feminist theory highlights the importance of listening to and valuing women's experiences and perspectives.

Empowerment and self-determination: Feminist theory aims to empower women to take control of their lives and make their own decisions.

Empowerment theory focuses on building capacity, promoting participation, and amplifying marginalized voices. Key principles of empowerment theory include:

Power analysis: Empowerment theory involves analyzing power dynamics to identify areas where marginalized communities can exert control

Participation and inclusivity: Empowerment theory emphasizes the importance of participation and inclusivity in decision-making processes.

Capacity building: Empowerment theory aims to build the capacity of marginalized communities to promote social change.

What Are The Recognitions Of Patriarchal Oppression?

Patriarchal oppression refers to the systemic and institutionalized domination of women and other marginalized groups by men. Recognitions of patriarchal oppression involve acknowledging and understanding the various forms and mechanisms through which this oppression operates. Some key recognitions include:

1. Historical Context

Patriarchal oppression has its roots in historical and cultural contexts, where men have traditionally held positions of power and authority.

i. First Wave Feminism (1848-1920): Emerged during the Industrial Revolution, focusing on suffrage, property rights, and education.

ii. Second Wave Feminism (1960s-1980s): Addressed issues like reproductive rights, domestic violence, and workplace equality.

iii. Third Wave Feminism (1990s-present): Explores intersectionality, queer theory, and global feminisms.

2. Cultural Context

i. Patriarchal Societies: Feminist theory critiques the cultural norms and institutions that perpetuate male dominance.

ii. Social Constructivism: Feminists argue that gender roles and expectations are socially constructed, not biologically determined.

iii. Cultural Representation: Feminist theory examines how women are represented in media, literature, and art, and how these representations shape cultural attitudes.

3. Social and Economic Inequality

Patriarchal oppression perpetuates social and economic inequality, limiting women's access to education, employment, healthcare, and other resources.

Types Of Inequality

i. Gender-based inequality: Women's subordination to men in various aspects of life.

- Economic inequality: Women's limited access to education, employment, and economic resources.
- Social inequality: Women's restricted access to social services, healthcare, and political participation.
- Cultural inequality: Women's representation in media, literature, and art, and the perpetuation of stereotypes.
- Political inequality: Women's underrepresentation in politics and decision-making positions.

ii. Class-based inequality: Economic disparities between women of different socio-economic backgrounds.

- Capitalism and economic systems: Concentration of wealth and power among a small elite.
- Education and skill-based discrimination: Limited access to quality education and job training.
- Discrimination and bias: Prejudice and bias against certain social classes or groups.
- Policy and institutional barriers: Laws and policies that perpetuate inequality.

iii. Racial and ethnic inequality: Intersectional oppression faced by women of color.

iv. Disability-based inequality: Exclusion and marginalization of women with

4. INSTITUTIONALIZED SEXISM

Patriarchal oppression is institutionalized through laws, policies, and social norms that perpetuate sexism and discrimination.

Types of Institutionalized Sexism

i. Workplace sexism: Discrimination and harassment in the workplace, including unequal pay and promotion opportunities.

ii. Educational sexism: Sexist attitudes and practices in educational institutions, including biased curricula and unequal access to resources.

iii. Healthcare sexism: Sexist attitudes and practices in healthcare, including inadequate reproductive healthcare and dismissive treatment of women's health concerns.

iv. Legal sexism: Sexist laws and policies, including those that restrict women's reproductive rights and perpetuate unequal treatment under the law.

5. Violence and Abuse

Patriarchal oppression is often accompanied by violence and abuse, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and assault.

i. What is the feminist perspective on violence against women?

Feminist theory views violence against women as a symptom of patriarchal power dynamics, where men use violence to maintain control and dominance over women.

ii. How do feminist theories explain the prevalence of domestic violence?

Feminist theories explain domestic violence as a result of societal norms and institutions that condone or ignore domestic violence, perpetuating patriarchal power dynamics.

iii. What role does intersectionality play in understanding violence against women?

Intersectionality recognizes that violence against women intersects with other forms of oppression, such as racism, homophobia, and classism, highlighting the need for inclusive approaches.

iv. How do feminist theories address the issue of victim-blaming?

Feminist theories challenge victim-blaming by emphasizing that violence is never the victim's fault, advocating for a shift in focus towards holding perpetrators accountable.

v. What strategies do feminist theories propose for preventing and responding to violence against women?

Feminist theories propose strategies such as education, challenging patriarchal norms, providing support services, advocating for policy reforms, and promoting healthy relationships and consent.

Feminist Theory and Practice has Implications for Men and Children

Feminists have highlighted the gendered nature of social relations in all spheres of public and private life. Their analyses have revealed men as privileged at the expense of women in many dimensions of social existence, including their exclusion from the waged labour domain when men collar high-paying jobs (Armstrong, 1984; Coyle, 1989). Feminist research has also demonstrated that men exert social control over women through the exercise of emotional, physical and sexual forms of violence (Rush, 1980; Dworkin, 1981). Although they have argued that women have rights of access to the same public domains as men if they wish, some feminists have also wanted men to take responsibility for many tasks which women have traditionally undertaken within the domestic realm (Segal, 1983). These include housework, child care and elder care (Walby, 1990). However, other feminists have found the inclusion of men in feminist activities extremely problematic and have chosen to resolve the matter by insisting that feminists should not work with men under any circumstances (Solanas, 1971; Jo, 1981; Frye, 1983). So, a substantial ingredient in feminist critiques of the status quo calls for an end to the privileging of men for it occurs at the expense of women. And, that is unjust. Sadly, the realisation of the implications of this stance has engendered fear in conservative men who wish to retain their privileges (Brooks, 1996). Instead of welcoming an enterprise through which even their own lives can be enriched, these men remain myopically fixed in a mythologised past that has accorded them

unchallenged governance (see Bly, 1985). And, they devote their energies to an anti-feminist attack to reverse feminist gains that they deem undermine their spheres of influence (see Lyndon, 1992; Farrell, 1994).

A further group of feminists have argued that for women to be truly free, men have to liberate themselves from the shackles imposed upon them by their adherence to patriarchal social relations (Dominelli and McLeod, 1989; Collins, 1991). And, they have sought to include children and men as beneficiaries of their social action. With regard to children, this has meant the recognition of children as individuals with their own set of inalienable rights (Clinton, 1996; Dominelli, 1999). Some feminist authors have attempted to find ways of responding to women's interests without pitting these against those of children (Dominelli and McLeod, 1989). Other feminists have found it difficult to reconcile women's needs for liberation with those of children for the same, and have continued to struggle with reconciling the contradictions in which women live (Wise, 1985). Some feminist scholars have identified the role of the state in using women caring professionals to control other women (Wilson, 1977). This too, has been considered unacceptable (Marchant and Wearing, 1986; Dominelli and McLeod, 1989). Although its realisation remains elusive, feminists have sought to be inclusive without being oppressive. That is, feminists have not sought to overcome one set of oppressions – that of women by men, by merely replacing it with another, that of men by women, or even by one group of women dominating other women.

Conclusion

Integrating feminist and empowerment theory in social work practice is critical for promoting social justice and equality. The proposed framework provides a critical foundation for social work practice, education, and research. By prioritizing critiquing patriarchal power structures, promoting empowerment and self-determination, fostering critical consciousness and social justice awareness, and building inclusive and equitable communities, social workers can promote social justice and equality, and create a more just and equitable society for all. Feminist theory includes many ideas, and may be frustrating for someone seeking a one-sentence answer to the question 'what makes a view feminist?' However, this characteristic of feminism is not new or particular to contemporary, third-wave, global feminism or eco-feminism. In 1913, a woman wrote: 'I myself

have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat, or a prostitute' (Gibbs 1992). In essence, feminist theory is a set of ideas originating with the belief that women are not subordinate to men or only valuable in relationship to men (servant, caretaker, mother, or prostitute), and that the disciplines, systems, and structures in place in our world today may be changed for the better if infused with a feminist point of view. But it is more than this. Feminist theory sets an agenda for action, the aim of which is justice and equality for women everywhere and, of course, also for the men and children to whom they are inextricably linked.

REFERENCE:

1. Dominelli, L. (2002). Anti-oppressive practice in social work. Journal of Social Work, 2(1), 9-22.
2. Gutierrez, L. M. (1990). Working with women of color: An empowerment perspective. Social Work, 35(2), 149-153.
3. Lee, J. A. B. (2001). The empowerment approach to social work practice: Building the beloved community. Journal of Community Practice, 9(1), 1-15.
4. Mullaly, B. (2010). Challenging oppression: A critical social work approach. Journal of Social Work, 10(2), 155-170.
5. Collins, P. H. (2000). Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment. Routledge.
6. Lee, J. A. B. (2001). The empowerment approach to social work practice: Building the beloved community. Columbia University Press.
7. Collins, P. H. (2000). Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment. Routledge.
8. Butler, J. (1990). Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity. Routledge.
9. Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. University of Chicago Legal Forum, 139-167.
10. Gutierrez, L. M. (1990). Working with women of color: An empowerment perspective. Social Work, 35(2), 149-153.
11. Solomon, B. B. (1976). Black empowerment: Social work in oppressed communities. Columbia University Press.
12. Lee, J. A. B. (2001). The empowerment approach to social work practice: Building the beloved community. Columbia University Press.

13. Kirst-Ashman, K. K., & Hull, G. H. (2017). Generalist practice with organizations and communities. Brooks / Cole.

14. Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. Stanford Law Review, 43(6), 1241-1299.

28

The Contribution of Sports to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Dr. Himangsu Poddar

Abstract

There are glaring gender disparities in India in terms of social and economic variables like political opportunities, health, and education. There is a significant and concerning disparity in all growth metrics since women trail behind males in practically every way. Policymakers are now considering methods to close it as a result of this. Women encounter numerous obstacles to playing sports, both overt and covert, which keep them from enjoying the many advantages that come with being physically active and playing sports. Women face prejudice and stereotyping everywhere they go. In addition to receiving less media attention, women athletes also face discriminatory and sexist remarks from both the media and members of their communities. Many of the gender stereotypes that still exist in today's world are exemplified by the sports industry, which has also shown itself to be very resistant to significant gender reform. By giving women and girls the chance to participate in sports, communities and civilizations empower them personally by encouraging self-assurance, leadership, collaboration, and a sense of accomplishment. They also question prevailing gender roles and conventions in society. Sport gives women a platform to rethink ideas of masculinity and femininity, dispel preconceptions that portray women as weak and inferior, and show their communities what they are capable of. Therefore, encouraging women's and girls' participation in athletics is a crucial instrument for women's empowerment, gender equality, and, more generally, societal transformation and development. The purpose of the research piece is to highlight the benefits that participation in sports offers to women and girls. Empowerment is the term used to describe the increased spiritual, political, social, educational, gender, or economic strength of individuals or groups. Experts agree that playing sports and being physically active may offer women and girls a variety of positive life outcomes. Women's movements

have not yet made extensive use of sports and physical exercise as a tactic. But already, our project partners and others on the network have a lot of positive stories to share.

Key wards: *Women empowerment, gender equity, well-being, self-esteem, social inclusion Sports.*

Introduction:

In both subtle and explicit ways, women face many barriers to participating in sports, which prevent women and girls from reaping the many benefits that can be gained from playing sports and engaging in physical activity. Around the world, women encounter discrimination and stereotyping. Women athletes receive lower levels of media coverage, and are subjected to sexist and derogatory language in the media and from people in their communities. The sporting world epitomizes many of the gender stereotypes which persist around the world today, and has proved to be highly resistant to meaningful gender reform. By creating opportunities for women and girls to engage in sport, communities and societies empower women and girls on an individual level, by promoting self-confidence, leadership, teamwork skills and a sense of achievement. They also challenge existing gender norms and roles within society. Sport provides a space in which women can renegotiate concepts of femininity and masculinity, challenge stereotypes which label women as weak and inferior, and demonstrate to their communities what they are capable of achieving. As such, promoting girls' and women's involvement in sports is an important tool in gender equality and women's empowerment and, more broadly, in development and social change.

Key Objectives:

- **Empowering Women and Girls:** Sports can empower women and girls by providing them with opportunities for self-expression, building confidence, and developing leadership skills
- **Challenging Gender Stereotypes:** Sports can challenge traditional gender stereotypes by showcasing women's capabilities and strengths in male-dominated fields.
- **Promoting Gender Equality:** Sports can promote gender equality by providing equal opportunities for women and men to participate, compete, and succeed.

- **Addressing Violence Against Women:** Sports can also be used as a platform to address violence against women and girls, by promoting healthy relationships, mutual respect, and non-violent conflict resolution.

➢ **Strategies for Achieving These Objectives**

- **Increasing Participation Opportunities:** Increasing opportunities for women and girls to participate in sports, including providing access to facilities, training, and resources.
- **Promoting Women's Sports:** Promoting women's sports through media coverage, sponsorship, and fan engagement.
- **Addressing Sexism and Harassment:** Addressing sexism and harassment in sports, including providing safe and respectful environments for women and girls to participate.
- **Empowering Women Leaders:** Empowering women leaders in sports, including providing opportunities for women to take on leadership roles and promoting women's voices and perspectives.

The Grassroots of Gender Disparities in Sports:

Although female athletes first appeared as participants at the Olympic Games in Paris in 1900, it wasn't until the 2012 Summer Olympics that all events featured female athletes, and all national Olympic committees sent a female athlete to the Games. Women's professional sports generally gained momentum from the second half of the 20th century.

Despite numerous advancements and incremental progress that has occurred since, women's participation in sports continues to encounter daunting obstacles, including unequal media coverage, disparities in funding, and lower remuneration in comparison to male athletes. A concomitant issue lies in the underrepresentation of women in sport organizations, where women are markedly less involved in operational and executive roles. Experts attribute these challenges to the unequal support for girls' and boys' participation in sports from a young age. Research reveals that girls between the ages of 6 and 9 exhibit equal interest in sports as boys. However, by age 14, girls drop out of sports at a rate six times higher than boys. Researchers contend that this alarming trend stems from the differential reinforcement girls and women receive regarding their participation

in sports. Conversely, other studies underscore the profoundly positive effects of practicing sports on girls, enhancing their confidence, self-esteem, and critical skill development. Therefore, support for young female athletes proves as important for their development, just as it is for boys.

Disparities in Participation

There was significant inequality between men's and women's, girls' and boys', sports in Australia in the 1940s. I grew up as the eldest girl in a family of four, with one brother who was 15 months older than me and another who was 15 months younger. Three years later, my younger sister was born. I therefore spent my early childhood playing cricket, kicking a football, climbing trees, and hanging out with my two brothers and their friends. I was labeled a "tomboy," a pejorative term for females who were outspoken and not "feminine" in those days, and my mother came under fire for letting me play with the guys. However, my mother was adamant; she paid for tennis lessons for all of us every weekend and taught me to swim with my brothers.

Rewards Disparities:

It was also evident that boys and girls received various rewards to participate in sports. Until relatively recently, though there are now few exceptions, men have earned more money than women in both amateur and professional sports, where the value of awards for winning championships has changed from trophies to money and has kept on increasing.

Differences in Media Attention:

Inequalities have also been observed in the press's recognition of athletic achievement. The national and state news-papers featured articles on my boys' rowing victories, while the girls' were barely acknowledged. Generally speaking, female athletes are not given the same degree of respect or visibility as male athletes. Neither Rwanda nor the developing world have particular characteristics in this regard. For the detriment of female athletes, women's sports receive substantially less newspaper coverage and television airtime than men's in industrialized nations. The recognition that comes with publicity is not given to women athletes who have put in just the same effort as men to compete worldwide. Unlike male sportsmen, they are rarely participated for the lucrative product endorsements.

Lack of Female Role Models:

Professional athletes have become the most famous individuals in the world right now, making headlines and endorsing a wide range of goods. Even kids in far-flung rural African towns can identify their favorite football players and wear T-shirts and notebooks featuring images of Manchester United or Arsenal players. Children all throughout the world are looking forward to these celebrities as role models and idols, especially during important athletic events like the World Cup. However, there are significantly few female athletes.

Girls who want to play sports are therefore less exposed to female role models. They are therefore less likely to gain from the positive example that these figures might provide. This lack of female sports role models is demonstrated by a study carried out by the Swiss Academy for Development in Lusaka and Kabwe, Zambia. When asked to name their favourite athletes, 61% of females in a sample of boys and girls were unable to do so, and just 19% of those who could name an athlete named a woman. Just 13% of the guys who were asked were unable to name a sports idol, and none of them could name a female athlete.

Use of Discriminatory Language:

The vocabulary used to characterize female athletes perpetuates ideas of inferiority or difference regarding women's athletic ability and the acceptability of women's participation in sports, even when women's sports do receive media coverage.The overly masculinized realm of athletics is where many of society's gender prejudices find their most extreme manifestation. Through the media and popular culture, these ideas are reinforced in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways at the community and school levels.

Applications in Sport

The development and advancement of gender equity in sports has been significantly influenced by the title, which was created to encourage equality in education. However, the evidence shows that women still have a long way to go before they are considered as equals and feel equal in the context of sports participation and employment. Based to statistical data, women are still dominated by men in both employment and sport participation, despite the fact that they are participating more than they did in the past and are getting better treatment in athletics and sports management. As a result, the

sports management sector should keep striving for a standard of excellence that genuinely regards women as equals, provides them with equal opportunities, and enables them to feel equal in both sports management and athletic engagement.

A study of a coed sport (quidditch) showed that this format of spectatorship enhances the perception of equality in sports of both male and female participants, and therefore, one could use this sport as an example of how to improve gender equity in sport participation. Further, it was shown that having a diverse workforce in sports governance enhances the performance of the sports organization, which shows that providing equal opportunity to women in sports management can positively affect the performance of sports organizations. Gender equity in sports is necessary and beneficial for increasing female participation and improving performance in sports governance.

Games and Sports Performance in Indian Women's:

The last decade has seen India rising as a sports powerhouse spearheaded by women sportspersons. We have witnessed the rise of some of the biggest names on the world stage, such as P.V. Sindhu (badminton), Saina Nehwal (badminton), Mira Bai Chanu (weightlifting), Mary Kom (Boxing), Dipa Karmakar (Gymnastics), Mithali Raj (Cricket), etc. Since the very first Olympics as independent India in 1948, there were no female participants; the first ever contingent featuring women sportspersons was sent in the second edition at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, where out of the 64-member contingent, only four female athletes. From the 2000s, when the first ever medal was won by an Indian female athlete, Karnam Malleshwari at the Sydney Olympics (the sole medal winner at those games) to the most recent edition of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, within 20 years, India won a total of 20 medals. Of the 20, 8 awards were won by women, constituting 40% of the winning pool; this percentage is staggering in the face of the women's participation percentage in India, a mere 6-7%. Even though we have come a long way, there is a lot more that needs to be done; however, the participation gap has reduced drastically, we still have not been able to achieve the 50% participation mark for the 50% population at the Tokyo Olympics it was 44.09% female athletes (56 out of the 127) and the largest ever women contingent.

India has immense talent for a population of 1.4 Billion people, but the stage and opportunities have not always been available. In recent years, there has been a growing effort to promote gender equality in sports, but still, a lot of barriers exist for women athletes, like economic, socio-cultural, male domination, sexual abuse and harassment, lack of family support, and a host of other issues. Nikhat Zareen, the two-time world champion, shared her experience of how her father's words were the biggest driving force for her. She ruminates about the words spoken by her father when she asks, "Is boxing only for boys? ", "He said, no. But they don't box because people expect girls are meant to stay at home and do housework." Another huge challenge for women sportspersons comes from administrative inefficiencies; the recently concluded Asian games featured ten sportspersons from Jharkhand, and from those five have secured a medal; at the same time, the state has been grappling with administrative inefficiencies that affect the women sportsperson the most. There are few roles filled in by women; out of 2088 posts of president, secretary and treasurer, only 58 have been filled by women. The women who have the support of their families and have been able to make inroads in the male-dominated sporting world have to deal with stereotypes, such as developing bodies with physical attributes similar to a man in terms of strength or as they are often socially subjected to comments on their appearances and mannerisms being "man-like" and how they would look ugly, no one would want to marry them.

According to RTI data, between 2010 and 2020, there were 45 complaints of sexual harassment to the SAI, of which 29 were against coaches. The issue of sexual harassment in sports is of grave concern as recently it made the headlines again when some of our greatest wrestlers in the country took to the streets, protesting against the Wrestling Federation of India Chief Brij Bhushan. The biggest question that arises here is: should people in power lead the sporting bodies at the national level? Even after a ban for WFI at United World Wrestling, which entails our sportspersons have to participate as neutral athletes and won't truly represent India, Brij Bhushan still heads the WFI; even after repeated calls to hold fresh elections, the system has failed the protesting wrestlers and there has been no real action against the "President of WFI". Then, there are instances of harassment and abuse by coaching professionals. The fact is a lot of women sportspersons are part of camps that are spread across the

country and the majority of them are trained by male coaches; within that the power dynamics that exist sometimes lead to situations like harassment and abuse. Sportspersons often hesitate to come ahead and talk about it purely to protect the honor of their families and also their careers. In the past decade itself, plenty of cases have come to light, and it is not just limited to one sport but a whole lot of them, like Cricket (A case was filed against the co-convenor of Cricket Association of Uttrakhand (CAU) under the POCSO act on the grounds of how the 16 year old was harassed and touched inappropriately for several years. The father of the complainant mentioned how she was asked to fulfill the physical needs of the others within the CAU, and there are allegations of the use of casteist slurs).

Recommendation:

The title has had a big impact on society because it has made it easier for women to play sports. But it hasn't done anything to help eradicate the masculine power and gender stereotypes that still dominate athletic sports and sport governance boards. As a result, there are still more men participating in sports. Given the increasing recognition of gender norms and the disparaging remarks made by male peers for wishing to play sports or for succeeding at masculine sports, it makes sense that women are less likely to participate in sports by the end of high school.The social training of young people into male and female roles must end, as must the denigration and underrepresentation of women in sports. To investigate the effects of having coaches of the opposite gender on sports participation, more research could look at the effects of having a female coach of a male

sports team on male participation, the effects of having a male coach over a female sports team, and the effects of having a female to female and male to male sports team.

Conclusion:

The study made it possible for women to participate, it has had a major effect on their involvement in sports. Nonetheless, it seems that women continue to encounter challenges related to gender equity in sports governance, perception in athletics, and representation in athletic media. Therefore, even if women have the opportunity to play sports, there is a socially conditioned belief that women shouldn't play manly activities since it makes them look gay and makes them subject to ridicule. However, media attention might be given to female athletes who are viewed as graceful and lovely, but not because of their athletic prowess but rather because of their looks. According to research, sports are still extremely male-oriented and heavily favored by men as their primary controllers.

In sports organizations have been shown to be more effective than all male organizations, it is critical to provide women with equal opportunities in sports governance. Furthermore, in order for women to truly be treated equally in sports, the media must start praising women for their athletic prowess rather than just their appearance or personal lives. Additionally, society must stop socially conditioning women into gender-stereotypical roles and let young girls follow their own interests, particularly if those interests include sports. Before women can be considered equals, males must start to view them as such. It will be difficult to change this perception in society because of the institutionalized masculinity that is the norm; however, if women are given the same opportunities to play sports as equals rather than as "female" participants, perhaps a change in societal perception will occur, as demonstrated by the research study on the coed sport of quidditch. The rise of more coed sports may contribute to a change in the sports industry's expectations of masculinity.

References:

1. Guthrie, S. R., and S. Castelnuovo (2001) "Disability management among women with physical impairments: The contribution of physical activity". In Sociology of Sport Journal, 18 (2001): 16-17, cited in Oglesby, Carole A., et al. (2006), op. cit.

2. United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (2003). Sport as a tool for development and peace: Towards Achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. New York. Available from http: / / www.un.org / sport2005 / United Nations General Assembly (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III). New York, 10 December 1948
3. United Nations (2006a). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Adopted by General Assembly Resolution 61 / 106 of 13 December 2006. New York. Article 30.
4. World Health Organization (2007c). Physical activity and older people: For people of all ages, physical activity improves the quality of life in many ways. Geneva, Switzerland. Available from http: / / www.who.int / moveforhealth / advocacy / information_sheets / elderly / en / index.html

29

Multiple Barriers to Women's Empowerment

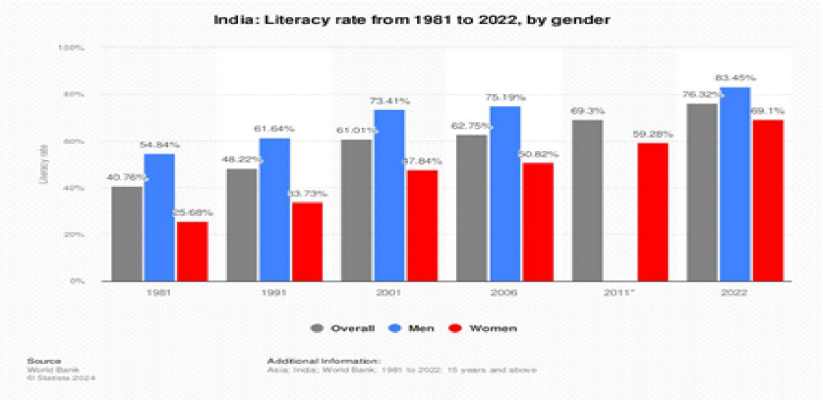
Ritika Dhar

From ancient times to the present, the most widely discussed topic in society is the exploitation of women. They are exploited everywhere from the private world to the outer world. As **Simone de Beauvoir** wrote in "*The Second Sex*", "One is not born but rather becomes a woman." This means that at the moment of birth, people are born with certain physical characteristics, but gradually, through socialization, they are replaced as women. Confined within the four walls of the family, certain responsibilities are assigned to them, and from there begins exploitation, torture, and oppression. Gradually, efforts are being made to empower them by freeing them from this oppression so that they can be well established in society.

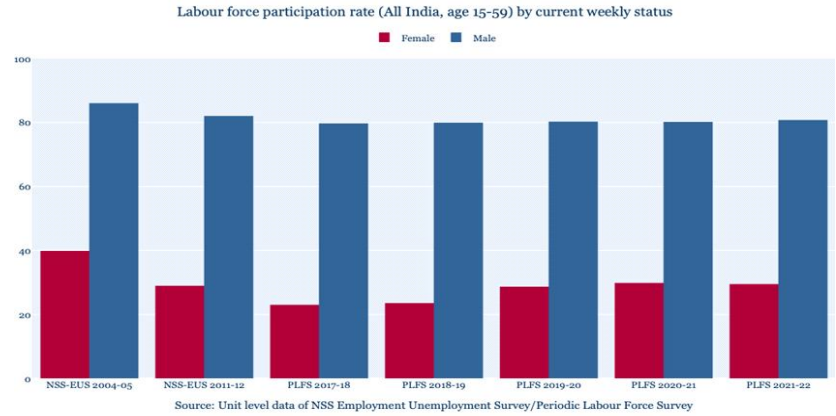
There has been a lot of discussion about women's empowerment in the last few decades. It is on the top list of the government's discussions as an agenda. In a word, women's empowerment is defined as the right of women to promote self-worth, build self-confidence, and influence social change for themselves and others. But as we stand today, the question that must be asked is whether women, who constitute half of the human race, are truly empowered by constitutional amendments that seek to preserve their place in politics? It is practically impossible to characterize the reservation of seats in politics as a proper empowerment, providing certain constitutional privileges. There are still many women in our society who are unaware of their privileges and rights, even today they feel more comfortable to limit themselves to family work. For a long time, such tasks as care, labor, service have been limited to women by identifying them as private spheres, which causes reluctance among

them to stay away from the political sphere, the workplace, and the outside world. At present, many women are engaged in the workplace, but at the end of the day, they have to be more engaged in family work. Therefore, it is never appropriate that the empowerment of women will be so easily achieved in a comprehensive manner.

From the educational point of view, it is true that women's education has improved, but still lags behind that of men.



Also, their presence in the workforce, politics, leadership roles is disproportionately low.



If we judge only theoretically, legally or numerically that women's empowerment has happened, it will never be appropriate in a holistic way. It is true that the Government of India has taken many initiatives for the welfare of women like, 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme',

'Ujjawala Scheme', but they also face many problems which become a major obstacle in their empowerment.

- **Sexual violence:** Sexual violence is one of the barriers to women's empowerment. "The word" "sex" "is used to refer to the natural irreconcilable biological differences between men and women." "According to the patriarchal view, the role of women in society is biologically determined, they are only represented as" "sex objects." "" This sexual harassment is not only observed in the workplace, education, but also in most cases domestic sexual violence. A 2011 study found that 24% of Indian men had experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives, with 20% of men having experienced sexual violence with their partners. Widespread sexual violence highlights the fact that while sexual violence within marriage is never against the law, marital sexual violence often goes unpunished. That's why many women ignore sexual violence in their marriage.
- **Patriarchy:** It literally means" "rule of the father." "" The main reason for the oppression and exploitation of women in politics, economy, culture and society as a whole is the domination of men over women. Today, patriarchy is largely defined as the power relationship between men and women.
- **Gender Inequality:** Although the Indian Constitution preaches the elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender, gender inequality still exists in our society, mainly suffered by women. The gender disparity in the distribution of responsibilities in educational institutions and the family sector takes the form of unequal pay in the workplace, racism, and inequality in promotion. From the family to the state, women are subjected to this discrimination.
- **Female infanticide:** Another obstacle to women's empowerment is female infanticide. Although the focus is on the empowerment of women in society, it is in that society that people are involved in brutal incidents like female feticide in the desire for a son. In this regard, it should be noted that the use of technology is helping to improve the country, increase the skills of people, but the availability of that technology has made gender identification easier. A study by the Pew Research Center, based on federal government data,

indicates at least 9 million female fetuses were killed annually between 2000 and 2019.

If the policy of women's empowerment adopted in the 21st century is to be successful in the overall sense, then we must first promote the concept of gender equality by changing the concept of socially constructed gender. For ages, people have exploited women by creating discrimination in society by exploiting 'gender', their lives are being confined within family boundaries. We need to establish gender equality in our society. Gender equality does not mean that men and women are equal. Rather, the rights, responsibilities and privileges of women and men should not depend on any gender, family responsibilities should be distributed equally among all by treating them as' human beings' instead of excluding them from the outside world and not specifying them only for women on the basis of gender. The initiatives and policies taken by the government should be implemented in the true sense. Because many initiatives, projects are only partially successful in theory, but they are largely unsuccessful on the ground. We will never be able to consider empowerment in a holistic way until we can implement the policies and projects aimed at empowering women not only in theoretical but also in practical terms. Women need to be brought to the centre of power. Since many people have not been able to come out of their stereotypes even today despite being educated in the teachings of modernization, we need to raise awareness in society by taking people away from patriarchal attitudes so that we can move towards creating a just society. Along with this, we have to give importance to an environment that values diversity and inclusion, respects individuality.

Reference

1. https: / / www.nextias.com / blog / women-empowerment /
2. Phillips, Anne, The Politics of Presence, 1998

30

The Plight of Women: Safety and Security Problems in India

Soumyadeep Bhowmik & Achyutananda Saha

Abstract

If we go through the history of the whole world, across various civilizations, cultures, timeline and professions women have always played a vital role but there role has been changing from day to day. History tells us how they became the second class citizen from the journey where once they were the head of the family. Although in recent scenario we have been witnessing some major changes in the roles and position of women in global sphere. Various reasons are supporting to achieve their goals and women empowerment, such as solving the women's problem through their own lens, spread of feminism etc. are some important aspects which are helping to reassure their positions in top posts and strengthening them to be self-sufficient. Everything seems good until and unless we point out some major problems which are being faced by women in their day to day life, be it in the case of a housewife or a working woman. In every sphere of life the biggest threat to a woman's dignity include problems relating to her own safety and security. Central questions of this article are what is the current safety and security problems of women in global sphere, how we can tackle these problems, the initiatives governments of every Nations should take and last but not the least as an individual what are our responsibilities which will help everyone to feel safe and secure with us and eventually lead to a healthy world where men and women both will share equal contribution for the betterment of the world. To complete this article, we have followed various prominent research methodologies, such as quantitative methodology.

Describing the current situation of women's security and safety we have come to this point that the fear of violence is wide spread among women all over the world. Most of the women feel unsafe in public spaces, especially at night. Women constitute half of the world's population. Despite of this fact

their rights, values, voices, experiences and contributions are overlooked and undervalued.

This article showed the pathway which will lead to a equal status society where men and women have equal rights, the steps which one should follow to do so and the root causes of this contemporary problem. Significantly this writing portrayed the present scenario regarding women's security and safety problems, how they are being a oppressed and exploited in every sphere of their life.

Keywords - *women empowerment, safety, security*

Introduction

India is a land where women are equated with goddesses. However, the real scenario can often be contrasting. In many situations, women are barely even treated as humans! Be it urban areas or rural, women in India face a daily struggle against misogyny. Despite the adverse circumstances, women continue to survive. And there are many reasons why they bear these: pressure from family, financial pressures, no support from family. Every day, in every country in the world, women are confronted by discrimination and inequality. They face violence, abuse, and unequal treatment at home, at work, and in their wider communities – and are denied opportunities to learn, earn, and lead. Women form the majority of those living in poverty. They have fewer resources, less power and influence compared to men, and can experience further inequality because of their class, ethnicity, and age, as well as religious and other fundamentalism. Violence against women has far reaching consequences on women's safety, including on their physical and psychological well-being, which often affect their ability to join and remain in the labor market. Women, Business and the Law's new Safety indicator expands its focus on this issue by examining laws addressing child marriage, sexual harassment, domestic violence and femicide as well as policy instruments, procedures, services, institutions and budget allocations to ensure their effective implementation. Women in the workplace encounter challenges beyond the typical concerns of physical safety, impacting both their physical and mental well-being. Women safety is the condition in which women are free from the risk of harm, violence, exploitation, and discrimination in all aspects of life, including their homes, workplaces, public spaces, and online environments. It encompasses physical, emotional, and

psychological well-being, ensuring that women can live, work, and move freely without fear of violence, harassment, or oppression.

Historical Background of Faminism Throughout ahe Ancient to Present Time

From ancient times to the modern world, the social status of women in different parts of the world was not linearly good. The influence of modern education and consciousness has made women aware of the concept of rights and individuality. Despite the fact that, the civilizations that developed in different parts of the ancient world once and whose main driving force was equal in size, their importance remained elusive. At different times, women took on the responsibility of running the family or society and performed almost the same amount of responsibility. Even in the Sumerian civilization of 3000 BC, it was impossible to think of women's social status at the same level as men. Their contribution was limited to family work, childbearing and raising children, and in temple prostitution. Even in those primitive times, they did not have property rights where rulers like Queen 'Kubaba' were at the top of the administration at that time. Even in the almost contemporary Egyptian civilization, we see the story of Queen Hatshepsut and Queen Cleopatra, and despite so much contribution, there was no improvement in the social situation there. We look at the later Greek and Roman civilizations, where women may not be found as rulers, but they have also contributed to the social field, but they have been kept subordinate to men. The barbaric way in which women were sold in slave markets highlights the disgusting side of civilization, as well as their social position. It cannot be said that the condition of women was very advanced in the history of ancient India. The status of women in different periods of India increased in some parts, but most of the time it was bad. In the early Vedic period, where we know about scholars like Ghosha, Lopamudra, Apa, Gargi, but in the later Vedic period, that same woman had to endure the curse of polygamy like "Sati". Where goddesses have been worshipped in India since ancient times, they were not socially protected and respected even during the Mauryan, Gupta or early medieval kingdoms.

Although the social status of women increased somewhat throughout the world in ancient times, but in the Middle Ages, darkness surrounded women more. From the beginning of Christianity, women have been called sinful. It is described as Eve's

fault that the accident happened, not Adam's fault. Their position in church we can describe by st. Paul's statement, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." With this, the feudal system of the Middle Ages not only humiliated women at the social level, but also made them more and more veiled under patriarchy in the family. In the Middle Ages thousands of women were sacrificed on suspicion of witchcraft, which is the result of patriarchy. Throughout the Medieval period, women were viewed as second class citizens, and their needs were always an afterthought. They were either held to be completely deceitful, sexual, innocent, or incompetent. There are examples of them being forced to accept the work of prostitution. The condition of women in medieval India was equally bad. Despite the merits of Sultana Razia, the way she was killed simply for being a woman reveals many things, even the life of women in the Mughal Harem and their forced confinement behind the veil destroyed the ancient culture of India. The evil influence of Sati in Hindu society had increased so much that Niccolò Manucci an Italiqn traveller fainted after seeing that. In Muslim-ruled Indian society, women still did not have equal rights to property.

Although there were some improvements in the social status of women in the dark time of the Middle Ages, did the practice of women being socially under patriarchy completely disappear? Not at all. During the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution, the ideas of humanism, liberalism, and individualism were awakened in women as well, so women from some sections of society became aware , but not in the case of the common and marginalized. One of the major reasons for the equal contribution of women workers to the benefits of the Industrial Revolution that Europe and the whole world enjoyed was that women workers were cheap, but where is their contribution written? Where the world-famous Napoleon himself thought that women were only "machines for producing children", the social status of women in the modern world can be imagined. In the case of India, although attempts were made to focus on the social status of women, it was limited only to the upper class. Where the law of 1829 banned Sati, but more than a hundred years later, in 1987, if the practice of Sati was enforced, then the social status of women in modern India can be imagined. However, it is not that attempts at reform have not

taken place at all, but they have remained vague, but awareness has been raised.

In the simplest sense, 'feminism' means challenging patriarchal dominance andControl, the field of 'women's history', that is, 'feminist history of women's lives'. Feminism, a belief in the political, economic and cultural equality of women, has roots in the earliest eras of human civilization. The writing of women's history has always been closely linked with contemporary feminist politics as well as with changes in the discipline of history itself . Activists within the first organised women's movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries found that women were largely absent from standard history texts and this inspired them to write their own histories. Detailed studies of women's work, trade unionism and political activities were produced by authors such as Barbara Hutchins, Barbara Drake and Alice Clark. With the fragmentation of the women's movement after the First World War, however, these pioneering histories tended to be lost from view. Women's history continued to be written – there was a renewed interest, for example, in the history of women's suffrage during the 1950s and early 60s – but these studies had little influence on the writing of history more generally or on the academic curriculum. It was the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), or 'second wave feminism', from the late 1960s that would have the greatest impact on the writing of women's history. And the third wave in 1980s and fourth wave after 2010. The history of feminism in India can be divided into three phases: the first phase, beginning in the mid-19th century, initiated when reformists began to speak in favour of women rights by making reforms in education and customs involving women; the second phase, from 1915 to Indian independence, when Gandhi incorporated women's movements into the Quit India movement and independent women's organisations began to emerge; and finally, the third phase, post-independence, which has focused on fair treatment of women at home after marriage as well as the work force, and their right to political parity.

Safety and Security Problems of Women in India

The problems are also not desired by the public authorities. In a venture of victimisation, bureaucracy operates in a gendered way to deny women their judicial rights and services. The illiterate women of the rural areas are more helpless especially the lower caste women. Fewer Police: Few Police, less reporting cases, less number of people

approach Judicial Institutions, delayed investigation and problems in prosecution also Police do not cooperate.

All these are factors that contribute to safety and security vice versa for women.

In this paper the two concepts are discussed as Sex-selective foeticide and Female infanticide.

The practice of sex-selective foeticide manifests a major gender skewed sex ratio resulting in low availability of girl child in society. Such a situation may lead to depreciation of the girls and women with a consequent instigation of violence against them. It is possible that girls who are born into such a society would be considered to have less value of their lives and even might have their rights violated. This make such individuals susceptible to discrimination, violence and exploitation as mentioned above. When the girl child is born, in families where sex selective foeticide is being practiced, she will be neglected and abused. Sexual and domestic violence may cause severe physical harm or even kill a person. It can be an urge for beatings or sexual harassment or other types of violence that pose a danger to women's health and life. The Other digesting such violence can develop a lot of psychological effects including, anxiety, depression, PTSD, and reduced self-esteem. It has long-term consequences on a woman's health as well as social interactions and safety. Co erating children are also victims thus resulting in intergenerational transmission of violence. This can lead to long-term negative impacts to the children's physical and mental growth as well as continuing to present women with unsafe settings. At the worst, commitment to dowry can trigger violence harm up to manslaughter or even murder. They cover dowry deaths, which refer to instances where brides are murdered for one reason or another with dowry being a precendeness factor, and "bride burning. Some of the barriers to the female from the abusive relationship include financial dependency on the in-laws. These inequalities make them incapable of seeking independence or help because they will be retaliated against. Honor violence and honor killings as two extreme manifestations of violence remain an essential gender issue since women and girls suffer from this phenomenon the most, especially in cultures that pay tribute to the family's honor and virtue. These acts are usually committed under one or the other justified by cultural norms and values touching on family honour, gender and morality. Women may be named, shamed, violated or even killed when they are considered to have dragged the honour of

their families into the dust. Decisions may regard joining the work force, marriage, relationship, dress code or any other action not consistent with the cultural or family norms. When women and girls move out of their homes, families and educational institutions to attend college, work, and participate in society, they come face to face with new threats of sexual aggression integral to a society that either tolerates or turns a blind eye to sexual harassment in public sphere (Jagori And UN Women, 2011, p. 43). In a 2010 UN Women supported survey about why New Delhi is unsafe for women and girls, 'the fear of being harassed' was as big an issue as the 'act of being harassed'. The findings showed 85+ percent of women respondents said they are scared of sexual harassment in public places. A plurality said they had experienced sexual harassment – ranging from lewd remarks to actual physical or virtual attack – at least twice a year, and as often as five times in 12 months. Studies place violence against women on a continuum from recounted traumas in women's everyday existence to war zone violence. Conflict enhances gendered disparity mainly because the effects of armed conflict are felt by either the male or female in a society. Women directly suffer physique assault, rape, maim, kidnap and displacement, while indirectly they suffer the ordeal and relevancy of losing their loved ones and being poor (Lindsey, 2001). Men and boys are also impacted in conflict significantly, primarily as the principle warring parties though thus mostly in the role of combatants and displacement (Lindsey, 2001, pp. 36–37). India does not have a proper channel way to systematically collect the gender specific violence against women due to conflict. Rape and gender specific violence has reportedly been used during conflict and, this has been documented in Jammu and Kashmir (Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, n.d., 3; Pal, 2013), the North-east (C-NES, 2004) and during the Maoist or Naxalite insurrections. Conflicts regularly result in the displacement of people and thus create refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). These situation make women very vulnerable in terms of shelter, health care and are more prone to exploitation. Interethnic violence destroys social and family ties, and weakens the base of the society. Some women may lose their protectors in form of husbands, brothers or fathers and thus become easy prey to the violators. The trauma of conflict, such as the exposure to violence and the death of a friend, is likely to result in psychological problems. Depression and anxiety are more prevalent among women, and their requirement for a more extended period in the hospital

poses new reverberating threats of loneliness. There has social injustice to women from the low castes like SC and ST women and they do not get an appropriate treatment. This increases vulnerability to violence and restricted access to justice. It is due to the fact many tribal Caste cultures have very rigid patriarchal structure, which has been unfriendly to the women. Women may have low decision making capacity on the social and family related issues; they suffer most concerning violence and exploitation. Most of the tribal and lower caste women come from poor families which increase the level of illiteracy, unemployment and poor resource endowment. Other forms of women dependency financially they end up becoming victims of either domestic violence or exploitation. These women are usually poorly educated and they seldom access any form of health care. Due to those factors they cannot seek help or search for support services or even do not have awareness about their rights that they can exercise. Of the two legal mechanisms for fulfilling the protection of women, both seem to lack adequate coverage for minority women. The female gender may not have adequate understanding of their legal status; there are proportional restrictions in accessing justice organised gender discrimination. Tribal and caste women may not be loud enough in the political arena, thus they may not speak out against issues that endanger their secure future. Because women may be denied access to education it becomes difficult for them to know more about their rights and the available mechanisms available toprotect them. Education liberates women so that they can change the social culture. Bare footed girl does not have any means to access any information on the rights any form of assistance should he or she be subjected to violence or discrimination . Dependence on male relatives economically positions these ko women for abuse and often lack the freedom or option to seek help or escape pitfalls. Female candidates are typically less favoured both in terms of income and employment. In one of the principal effects of economic inequality, women rely on men in the family. Patriarchal practises dictate that most female homemakers in many traditional communities do not have time to engage in schoool or employment. This economic subjection exposes the women to domestic violence and anybody, because they cannot afford to stand on their own to get a job. Research reveals that women with personal earnings direct control the ability to leave violent spouse. However, the conditions prevailing in the present Indian economy prevent this independence. Third, lower-income households' women are vulnerable

to exploitation. Many do not have enough money to feed their families, to pay rent or bills, or to make ends meet; in exchange for food, they take whatever they can get in terms of job hazards, job insecurity and low wages in areas such as domestic work, farming or informal employment. Their economic dependence also limits their options and at the same time, makes them vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse and harassment at the workplace.

How to Ensure Safety and Security Problems of Women

Cultivating safe spaces for women calls for a protection-centred approach that is legal and policy reformist, social change crusader, educational reformist, and community-strengthening reformist. Here are several steps that can be taken to address safety and security concerns effectively:

1. Strengthening Legal Frameworks:

Improve Legislation: Develop legislation and policies that target violence against women in specific, of which includes; battering, sexual harassment, and trafficking.

Fast-Track Courts: Creating special high-speed courts for the cases of sexual violence, to ensure speedy justice.

Strict Punishments: Increase the severity of the punishment for use as a deterrent The increase in the severity of punishment serves as a kind of deterrent.

2. Law Enforcement Reforms:

Training Police: Offer gender sensitive orientations to officers in charge of enforcing the law, in order that they can treat cases that involve women appropriately.

Women Officers: Market Surkov called for the employment of more women in the police forces, so that they are always around to assist the female victims.

Helplines and Support Services: 24 hour helpline should be created for women in distress with specialist staff to talk to.

3. Community Engagement:

Awareness Programs: Organise gender-sensitive campaigns within communities to create awareness on women's rights, and need for gender equity.

Local Vigilance Committees: Elect community-based committees to whip incidences of gender-based violence.

4. Educational Initiatives:

Empowerment through Education: Create awareness on the need for girls and women to education, women's rights, issues on self-defence and every day life skills.

Workshops and Seminars: Conduct camps in schools, colleges and workplaces is also recommended.

5. Public Awareness Campaigns:

Media Campaigns: Promote the problems of women's safety using media, change stereotypical thinking and enculturate gender equality.

Campaigns Against Harassment: Take public awareness and announcement campaigns to fight street, domestic and all types of violence.

6. Safe Public Spaces:

Infrastructure Improvement: Lighting, surveillance and maintenance of public places should be well arranged in order to improve women security.

Public Transport Safety: measures that can be taken in order to reduce the risk for women using public transportation, for instance, carriages designed only for women, and telemetric protection.

7. Support Systems:

Counseling Services: To offer emotional counselling and counselling to the affected victims of violence.

Shelters and Safe Houses: The need for accommodation that will provide shelter for women in such precarious circumstances ought to be realised.

8. Engagement of Men and Boys:

Involve Men: To bring a positive change in the attitudes of the societies towards gender and relationships, talk to men and boys.

Mentorship Programs: Programmes that enhance positive role modelling among male stakeholders especially in schools and colleges MUST be developed.

9. Technology and Innovation:

Mobile Apps: Create and advertise applications for use in situations where people can easily report harassment or violence and those that can give out their locations.

Real-time Reporting: Develop technology protocols for the instant documentation of occurrences and the sharing of information about safety assets.

10. Policy Development:

Gender Policies: Develop and integrate policies related to women's protection in all fields of government to adopt the multidisciplinary approach to the issue.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Strive to evaluate the efficiency of implemented interventions and policies periodically for making adaption on new obtained information.

Conclusion

My perception towards the Safety and Security of Women in Our Society –

Therefore, we have to change the idea of the masculinity and femininity in modern India to fight against number of hegemonic patriarchal practises and norms of controlling women and to combat misogyny and to encourage gender sensitivity. Current promises can only be supported by forceful public policy, changes concerning the procedure of polishing and the judiciary, female employees, as well as increasing the diligence of the state. Although there are many policies which should still be enforced aggressively, there are also some which should be enforced strictly-Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.

Test Act 1994 etc. pre-conseption and pre-netal diagnostic techniques. It is high time the women of India take up gun Culture to defend themselves and make them secure.

We also need to show the reasons for which NGOs should play a significant role in preventing violence against women, attracting public attention. Also need to lobby central and state governments for better leadership, for effective response to meet the needs of women.There is therefore need to step up the level of quality education to bring about better awareness in the society. Pre-Netal Diagnostic Techniques Act,1994 etc.

We should popularise female gun ownership in India for their safety and security.

We should also demonstrate the important role of NGOs in drawing public attention to prohibit violence against women. Also have to pressurise central and state governments for stronger leadership for effective responding to the needs of women. In addition, there is an urgent need increase the level of quality education for better awareness in the society.

Reference:

1) Nagalaxmi, V, 2022, 'The Role and position of women in Vedic period in India', v.11, Pp. 151-153

2) Mushtaq, Sabah, 2019, 'Women in the European Middle Ages, 1200-1500: An Appraisal', v.32, Journal of the Punjab University Historical Society

3) Browne, Victoria, 2013, Feminist Historiography and the Reconceptualisation of Historical Time, Liverpool: University of Liverpool, p.11

4) Link:https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/feminism-womens-history(last accessed – 10th November)

5) Hannam, June, Women's history, feminist history Link:https://archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/womens_history.html#resources(last accessed – 10th November)

6) Kumar, Radha, 1993, The History of Doing, New Delhi: Indraprastha

7) Combat Law (2003), the human rights magazine, special number on violence against Women, September-October Court meeting (2003), Amendments to Ordinances and Appendices to Ordinances, No 19, XV D Sexual Harassment, University of Delhi

8) Dalal, Sucheta (2003), 'Bias in the Boardroom', the Sunday Express, May 18

9) Stanko, A. Elizabeth, 1995, Women, crime and fear, Sage Publication, v. 539, pp. 46-58

10) Vishwanath, Kalpana, Mehrotra, Suravi Tandan, 2007, "Shall we go out" Women's safety in public spaces in Delhi, Economic and Political Weekly, v.42, pp. 1542-1548

11) Bock, Gisela; James, Susan, 1992, _Beyond equality and difference_ , London: Routledge, pp. 62-102

12) Karp, Aaron; Marwah, sonal; Manchanda, Rita; 2015, Unheard and uncounted: Violence against womens in India, Jstor

13) Mishra, Jugol Kishore, 2006, Empowerment of women in India, Indian Political Science Association, pp – 867-878

14) Primo, Natasha, 1997, Women's Emancipation: Resistance and Empowerment, Taylor and Francis, pp. 31-44

31

Patriarchal Mindset: Effect on the Presidential Election of U.S.A

Neelava Ghoshal

Abstract

When the book " The Feminine Mystique" was written by famous author and activist, Betty Friedan where she spoke of the independence and empowerment and what the women of U.S.A seek even in such modern nation. But when it was first published in the year of 1963, and even after 63 years of publication, the women of U.S.A are still burdened under patriarchy, even though they have received the voting rights, but they lack power and significant nomination to be chosen as the President, which is the supreme position in the executive.

The behaviour of the people of U.S.A incorrigibly suffers from patriarchal leaning which have led them to oppose or avoid voting any female candidate from ruling the nation. Curiously one can take the example of many women who had served and have been elected as the Senator, or have hold a higher position in the government, but till now, we find none to be elected as the president, extending the presidential office to be run by a women. There are accounts of prominent female candidates, with the likes of many interesting individuals like Hillary Clintin, Jo Jorgensen, Jill Stein, Cynthia McKinney and most recent Kamala Harris, by being in a neck to neck competition, with their male counterpart. There have been many nominations made from the Green party or the Libertarian party, but despite all these, the majority have failed. It is quite interesting that only Democratic party candidate, Hillary Clinton and her political successor, Kamala Harris from the same party have been able to contest in the mainstream election campaign. But curiously, Clinton failed miserably, as Donald Trump was elected to serve as the president. The challenge persists as the wake of the opinion poll offers a challenging

notion to the presidential election of 2024. The research tries to uncover the role of patriarchal mentality persisting in U.S. politics.

Keywords- *Presidential elections, Empowerment, Female Candidates , Election Campaigns.*

The concept of feminism and feminist philosophy

The concept of gender as well as the bias on the basis of the gender is a social phenomenon, precisely a social manifestation. The idea of the male-female capacity is created by the narrow convictions as well as the dominating mindset of the society. Significantly the males are held to be superior as well as enduring, while the women are often held to be incapable of owning any of such social resources. Inorder to counter this false conviction, the philosophy of feminism was created, which was a part of the 'cognitive revolution'(Harari, 2011) which principled on redemption and the empowerment of the women. It can also be referred to the celebration of the womanhood, wherein they are held in equal footing with their male counterparts. Significant philosopher and feminist Bell Hooks describes the philosophy as, ''a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression'' (Hooks, 2000) a philosophy or a branch of belief which inadvertently will bring redemption from all the biased convictions, along with an aim for creating a world, where every one is held to be equal. There were numerous struggles, numerous movements and numerous 'waves' which were done by many thinkers and philosophers. Significantly one of the prominent ground of this freedom struggle had been the Western world, or the nations which are now regarded as belonging to the global north. Numerous thinkers and activists have published greater amount of works for achieving rights and freedom for the women. Numerous thinkers and activists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, and many more have made contribution in this field. Among them Betty Friedan, can be considered a radical thinker, who emerged as greater spokesperson for the rights that serves for the democratic authority as well value in the daily day to day lives. The feminist study developed day by day with the modernisation process along with the spread in the nations of the global south as people, especially the women of the under developed nations started voicing their demands for equal rights, equal pay checks and equal status.

The idea of feminism in the USA and its contemporary condition

When we see and observe the condition of U.S.A. and the politics of empowerment, the nation stands as the greatest one. As it is the

motherland of many feminist thinkers and activists, who paved the way for te development and empowerment of the women. Although the concept of the feminism managed to form many newer dimension judging upon the diaspora and population demography, but in certain macro and micro level, the idea is somewhat, betrayed or falsified.

As stated earlier, even after the 63 years of the publication of the Feminine Mystique, although the women received the voting rights and the rights regarding the political representation, but a question arises, whether the women are thought to be capable enough for running the whole nation? When the first voting rights movement or the women suffragette movement started along with the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, it marked the genesis of the women demanding empowerment as well as demanding the chance to vote and select their leaders. Several organisations like the American Woman Suffrage Association or the National American Woman Suffrage Association developed inorder to unify the women for demanding their voting rights as well as their shares in the government. With the ratification of the 19th Amendment of the U.S constitution on 18th August, 1920 the women gained the voting rights. Interestingly Rebecca Latimer Felton was the first official of the U.S senate in the year of 1922. After her, several prominent thinkers were selected as to represent the U.S senate, like Margaret Chase Smith, Dianne Feinstein, Barbara Boxer, and most recent Kamala Harris. They all happen to hold topmost position in the law making body. Eventually we can see Hillary Clinton, and most recently Kamala Harris who have directly participated in the mainstream presidential election.

Data is power: The procedure of the election with current data

The whole process of election in U.S.A is quite complex as well as quite a meticulous one, as it starts off with the political parties putting their names of their candidates along with forming a schedule for the rallies as well as the whole campaign procedure, where in several debates as well the agendas for the election takes place, just inorder to reach out to the masses.

The main voting events takes place through two processes- Primaries and Caucuses, which are the selection of the candidates as well as the process of representation. These are two of the critical process, which in brief can be described when the political parties poll their candidates, opines for the delegates who will endorse them as well as nominate them in the further election processes. It is during

process when the presidential candidates are chosen, they also select the vice-presidents as well, which lays the path for the further election process. When the election starts, it is mainly the people from each state, cast their votes in favour of a single candidate. Significantly, candidates from the minor parties are also found in their ballot lists.

As the United States works on an indirect democracy, these votes casted by the voters actually helps in the nomination of the electors, who then goes on to become the group of the presidential candidate. Now there are proportional ways in the election process as well as it takes place, but this can be roughly held as the framework of the electoral procedure. Now as we try to compare the participation of women in this whole election process, we get to see that the first presidential candidate who was first selected in the general election of 1940 was Gracie Allen, who belonged to the Surprise Party only gained 42,000 votes. Similarly we can see some well known candidates like Clinton who took part in the 2016 gained somewhat 65.8 million votes and most recently Kamala Harris secured somewhat near to 67.9 millions of votes.

Persisting peril of patriarchal mindset.

One of the major mindset that is being followed in the U.S.A is the open market economy or the neo-capitalism, wherein we can see about the empowerment of all by the virtue of making profits, with significant economic power. In a liberal or in a liberal state, one can see that the men and the women are both seen in an equal footing, as both engage in trades and businesses, but still the patriarchal mindset persists, even in a larger nation like U.S.A. When we study about the income disparity, we find that financial, economic and employment figures, we have not been able to derive any substantial relationship, either positive or negative, between the variables representing financial sector growth and female workforce involvement and empowerment.(Tariq, Mansur, 2015) So inorder to determine the way in which the patriarchal mindset persists in the U.S.A in and through the electoral process can mainly be understood through certain anchoring points-

1. Thus saith great Freud- once again we depend upon the Feminine Mystique, where we see the narration and study of Friedan, who goes onto say that the ‘wrong to say, it started with Freud’(Friedan, 1963) as she goes on to say that it was predominantly put into influence by the so called scientific stature of the psychoanalysis,

that the women are considered to be childlike and constantly need a male companion who could guide her. This etched somewhat of a lesser psychology in the minds of the people as Freudian analysis was first of all a scientific approach, and along with that, it was quite a popular field of study at those times. This cannot be denied at all, as the impression created for women at those times, managed to prevail, even during this contemporary years, as the women are perceived to be capable enough for running a territory (as we see that there are many woman senators) but not that much capable of running the state. Significantly the idea of the patriarchal domination was solidified along with the idea of scientific universality as the discrimination and the bias was validified, and the burden was carried on till a significant amount of time. This whole psychological part plays an important role in the persisting patriarchal domination in the presidential election.

2. The allegory of U.S.A, but it is not Lady Liberty – when observing the personification of the different nations along with their respective historical incident and traditions, most of the time we find that it is being portrayed through a lady, signifying the motherland. But when we try to imagine the current condition of the U.S.A both in the field of defensive façade and as a nuclear power, we get to imagine that, it is being greatly picturised as a heavily armed man, the one who is forever ready to fight.

This pictorial representation doesn't takes into account that a woman to be guiding the nations. Significantly when we see the 2016 and the 2024 presidential election, we get to see that both had many common things, and in both of them we find that there were women who were representing the Democrats and they were pitted against, again coincidentally, the same opponent, Mr. Donald J. Trump, the representative of the Republicans. Quite significantly one can notice that in some of the campaigns, there were some mis comments made, that were done to show that the women are significantly mismatched and insignificant in the American politics and especially as the President of the United States.(Jalalzai, 2024). Judging that it was done in one of those mass conventions of the campaign programme, remained unjustified and to a certain extent, was accepted by the masses of the Americans. This basically is not a reference to the stereotyping certain aspects, but in a greater and more convenient way, gender colouring and gender coding those very certain aspects which are rather baseless and invaluable in a wholesale manner.

3. The House with a glass ceiling- certainly one of the prominent after effect of the second World War, the situation was judged the American women were entitled with a significant economical footing, and parallelly, even some gained popular position. This was mainly a situation when we see the women are employed in ammunition factories or in automobile industries, the time when we see the men out there fighting for their nations. A strong picturisation that I consider to be the face of the women empowerment at that particular point of time is the poster named as "We Can Do It" which was produced by Westinghouse Electric in the year of 1943. Although the piece of art later became the part of the history of feminism and later on revived in the 1980s and this was significantly the time when the first vice presidential women candidate was nominated . Although there were some who were nominated or were chosen to be the female vice presidents, like Geraldine Ferraro, but they were dropped off from the rooster by the year of 1984. It took nearly four decades after that incident that Kamala Harris became the first female vice president, and that of being Indian origin, to fight and win the seat of the deputy president. One can also sense the popularity that was catered by the image of Harris, as well as the votes she received from the masses. But still the seat of acquiring the head of the state remains out of question(Jalalzai, 2024). This is influenced by the phenomena of glass ceiling which was first used Marilyn Loden. Significantly this theory or term can be best used for being the reason for the discrimination against the women. The idea of women empowerment remain out of the hand, if the erected glass ceiling is broken down, and no such job restriction is erected.

The dawn of the new empowerment

When we watch the scenario of Geraldine Ferraro or when we see the condition of Hillary Clinton, although they received a massive support, but still they were ultimately left unelected. When watching the real demography of the election process, we get to see that a percentage of population voted for the respective candidate, but eventually it was not a majority, nor it was that much inorder to catapult them to taste victory.

While judging the demography of the votes that Clinton received was from the women, African-Americans and the college graduate students, which is massively in a staggering 54% by the women, while the AfricanAmerican vote counted to 88%, and the white college

students voted for her by 52%. The numbers speak very differently, as it was chalked to be a massive victory for her, but when we see the opposing demography, it was the white men and the masses who held the orthodoxical view and voted for her opponent, resulting in her defeat.

This event was again repeated with 53% of the votes from the women voters, while the 86% African American voters voted for her. Significantly we can see the numbers are quite similar in a sense, and it can be noted that the glass ceiling and the embedded psychology dominates the mindset of the male voters. The preference and the ideal nature of the leaders, in a developed and armed nation like American, most prominently results in the shape of men. But one thing that is indeed to be kept in the mind, is the development of education as well as the reconsideration of the prevailing mindset. When judging the vote bank of the votes received by the women candidates, it mainly arose from the educated students, which is due to the education, and empowerment through the logic by judging from the policies. While it was empowerment for the African-Americans, and the practice of selfreliance of the women voters. Each and every demographic details shows us the true nature of the psychological dimensions of the empowerment. Quite significantly the votes that were casted in opposition to the women candidates were significantly by an older generation and the majority of illiterate white population, and this significantly shows us the pattern of people's thinking which is undoubtedly filled up with hollow reasoning and illogical biases, creating an unnecessarily undemocratic society, which is yet again fuelled by baseless hatred and undebatable vain beliefs. But significantly one can also argue how does the empowerment or the election of the women candidate be certainly successful in spreading the female empowerment? There are certain shortcomings to the policies that were created by the candidates like promotion of death penalty, as well as issuing little to no importance to the climates, which have been the case of the major fallout of the votes of the female candidates. On the atter, the need for a proper democracy comes first, in case of empowerment, especially for a nation like United States of America. With a critical note the voters of the States are used to many new development as well as empowerment, so the women leaders and the candidates should turn to more sensitive and unique issues like accommodating the migrants, or looking ways for curing the struggling capitalist environment.

Significantly the idea of empowerment should also be thought through the view or the opinion of the women also as well, as they should also focus on the creation of the unique nature of the feminism along with the changing times as well as the developing world, in the context of the global north.

Future prospectives: Does the story have a happy ending?

The demographic of the election process, shows us that the people are becoming conscious, and all along a new generation of the voters are evolving, with their mindset free from the gender biases, who doesn't relate the super power and the nuclear strength to the biases of any specified gender, or to any restriction of any social structures. One can see that the upcoming results and the voter turn out might favour the women candidates, and optimistically we can even find a women president of the United States, which might lead to the collapse of the glass ceiling and in a sense true equality of the men and women.

Although U.S.A. boosts that women there, enjoy most level of the freedom as well as the empowerment(Lyness and Groto,2018). Although they are free from the superstitions and the cultural biases that the nations from the global south suffers from, but still they are the ones which lacks with a women president. But there should be a question, that we should question ourselves as well as try to quantify our inner consciousness, is it enough for them to achieve empowerment through the means of electing a woman, as a President, or in a sense compromising with the quality of democracy, all in a whiff of creating an unbiased society. We need to retrace and rethink the problem with politics of empowerment.

References

1. Friedan, Betty (1963). The Feminine Mystique. W.W. Norton& Co., 126-148
2. Dutta Mishra, Anil. Women Empowerment: Issues and Challenges
3. Laurel Weldon, S. Power ,exclusion and empowerment: Feminist innovation in political science. Purdue University. Women's Studies International Forum
4. Hooks, Bell (2000). Feminism Is For Everybody: Passionate Politics. Routledge
5. M. Fiss, Owen(1994). What is Feminism?. Arizona State Law Journal.
6. Noah Harari, Yuval(2011). Sapiens: A Brief History Of Humankind. Harper.

7. Jalalzai, Farida(2024).America's glass ceiling remains- here are some of the reasons why a woman may have once again lost the presidency. The Conservation.

8. S. Lyness, Karen and R. Grotto, Angela(2018). Women and Leadership in the United States: Are We Closing The Gender Gap? Annual Review of Organisational Psychology and Organisational Behaviour. Vol 5:227265.

32

Women, Power, and Politics: Challenges and Triumphs in Political Leadership

Md Nurul Hasan Sk

Abstract

This research paper explores the intricate relationship between women, power, and political leadership, focusing on the challenges and triumphs faced by women in navigating political spaces. Despite global progress in promoting gender equality, women continue to encounter significant barriers in accessing and wielding political power. These challenges range from deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, gender bias, and limited access to political networks, to systemic exclusion from decision-making positions. By analyzing case studies of women leaders from various regions, this paper examines the strategies they employ to overcome these obstacles and make impactful contributions to governance and policy. The paper also delves into the broader societal and institutional factors that either facilitate or hinder women's political empowerment, such as legal frameworks, electoral systems, and socio-cultural attitudes towards female leadership. It highlights the transformative role that women in politics play in advancing gender-sensitive policies, promoting inclusive governance, and reshaping power structures. Through a comparative analysis, this study sheds light on the unique leadership styles of women and the ways in which they navigate power dynamics in male-dominated environments. Ultimately, the paper underscores the importance of increasing women's representation in politics, not just as a matter of equity, but as a means to enhance the quality of political decision-making and democratic governance. It concludes with recommendations for fostering an environment that supports and empowers women in political leadership roles, aiming to break the persistent barriers to gender parity in politics.

Keywords: *Women in politics, Political leadership, Gender equality, Empowerment, Political representation, Women's rights, Women's activism.*

Introduction:

The relationship between women, power, and politics is a multifaceted and evolving dynamic that has garnered significant attention in recent years. Historically, political leadership has been predominantly male, a pattern entrenched in cultural norms, institutional biases, and societal expectations. Women have often been relegated to the periphery of political life, facing numerous barriers that hinder their access to leadership roles and decision-making processes. However, as the global dialogue surrounding gender equality gains momentum, women are increasingly challenging these longstanding norms, making significant strides in political representation and leadership.

Despite the progress made in many countries, women continue to face formidable obstacles in their pursuit of political power. These challenges manifest in various forms, including systemic discrimination, gender bias, and societal attitudes that undervalue women's contributions. Many women leaders encounter resistance not only from male counterparts but also from institutional structures that are often not designed to support female participation. Furthermore, the intersectionality of gender with other identities, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, complicates the political landscape, creating additional layers of disadvantage for women from marginalized backgrounds.

Nevertheless, women have demonstrated remarkable resilience and resourcefulness in navigating these challenges. Their experiences and successes reveal a rich tapestry of leadership styles and strategies that differ from traditional male-dominated approaches. Women leaders often emphasize collaboration, inclusivity, and community engagement, fostering an environment where diverse voices are heard and valued. By examining the journeys of prominent female leaders across various regions, this research aims to illuminate not only the challenges they face but also their triumphs and the innovative approaches they employ to effect change.

This paper will begin with an analysis of the barriers to women's political participation, drawing on case studies that highlight the systemic issues at play. Following this, it will explore the unique leadership qualities that women bring to the political arena, examining how these qualities can lead to more effective governance and policy-making. Additionally, the research will address the critical role of

women's leadership in promoting gender-sensitive policies and advocating for social justice, ultimately contributing to a more equitable society.

This study aims to underscore the necessity of empowering women in political leadership roles, not only as a matter of social justice but also as a means of strengthening democratic governance. By fostering an environment that supports and uplifts women leaders, societies can benefit from diverse perspectives and inclusive decision-making processes. This research endeavours to highlight the significance of women's contributions to politics and the imperative of creating systemic change to ensure that future generations of women can thrive as leaders in their communities and beyond.

Objectives:

- Examine the systemic and cultural barriers that hinder women's access to political leadership roles, including societal attitudes, institutional discrimination, and electoral challenges.
- Investigate the unique leadership styles and approaches employed by women in politics, highlighting how these differ from traditional male-dominated leadership models.
- Analyze how intersecting identities, such as race, ethnicity, and class, impact women's experiences in political leadership and the challenges they face.

Methodology:

This research paper has been employ a qualitative methodology, utilizing a combination of case study analysis, literature review, and semi-structured interviews to explore the challenges and triumphs of women in political leadership. The case study approach has been focus on prominent female leaders from diverse political contexts, allowing for an in-depth examination of their experiences, strategies, and impact on governance. A comprehensive literature review will be conducted to synthesize existing research on gender and political leadership, identifying key themes and gaps in the current discourse. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with women leaders, political analysts, and gender studies scholars will be conducted to gather firsthand insights and personal narratives, enriching the analysis with diverse perspectives. This multi-faceted approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding women's political

participation and leadership, ultimately contributing to the discourse on gender equality in governance.

Systemic and Cultural Barriers to Women's Access to Political Leadership Roles

Women seeking to enter political leadership roles encounter a myriad of systemic and cultural barriers that significantly impede their progress. One of the primary barriers is societal attitudes, which often perpetuate traditional gender norms that prioritize male leadership. Many cultures hold ingrained beliefs about the roles women should occupy, frequently relegating them to domestic or supportive functions rather than positions of authority. These societal perceptions can lead to widespread bias, where women are viewed as less competent or qualified for leadership compared to their male counterparts. This bias is often internalized, resulting in diminished self-confidence among women and discouraging them from pursuing leadership roles.

Institutional discrimination further compounds these challenges. Political institutions are frequently structured in ways that inherently disadvantage women, with policies and practices that Favor male candidates. This can manifest in various forms, such as biased hiring practices, unequal access to resources, and a lack of institutional support for women seeking leadership positions. Additionally, political parties may have an insufficient commitment to promoting female candidates, leading to underrepresentation in nominations and leadership roles. In many cases, women also face hostile work environments characterized by gender-based harassment, discrimination, and a lack of mentorship opportunities, further marginalizing them within political spheres.

Electoral challenges present another significant hurdle. The financial cost of running for office can be prohibitive for many women, particularly in societies where they have limited access to funding and financial networks. Women candidates often struggle to secure campaign financing, making it difficult to compete effectively against male candidates who may have better-established connections. Furthermore, electoral systems that Favor incumbents or established political figures can disadvantage women who are often new to the political arena. Inadequate media representation and coverage of women candidates can also perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce existing biases, limiting their visibility and appeal to voters.

Additionally, the absence of gender quotas or affirmative action measures in electoral processes often results in a lack of institutional mechanisms to promote women's participation and leadership in politics.

Overcoming these systemic and cultural barriers requires comprehensive strategies that involve policy reforms, public education, and the active promotion of women's leadership in political contexts. By addressing societal attitudes, dismantling institutional discrimination, and creating more equitable electoral systems, societies can foster an environment that empowers women to take on leadership roles, ultimately enhancing the quality of democratic governance and contributing to more inclusive decision-making processes.

Unique Leadership Styles and Approaches of Women in Politics

Women in politics often employ unique leadership styles and approaches that distinguish them from traditional male-dominated models. These differences can be attributed to a combination of socialization, lived experiences, and inherent values that women bring to leadership roles. This section investigates several key characteristics and approaches commonly observed in female political leaders, highlighting their significance and the impact they have on governance and policy-making.

- **Collaborative Leadership:** One of the most notable features of women's leadership is their inclination towards collaboration and consensus-building. Women leaders often prioritize teamwork and collective decision-making, seeking input from diverse stakeholders and fostering inclusive environments. This contrasts with traditional male leadership models that may emphasize individual authority and competition. By valuing collaboration, women can create a sense of belonging and shared purpose, leading to more cohesive and effective governance.
- **Empathy and Emotional Intelligence:** Women leaders tend to exhibit higher levels of empathy and emotional intelligence, allowing them to connect with constituents on a deeper level. This empathetic approach enables them to better understand the needs and concerns of the communities they serve, making their policies more responsive and relevant. In contrast, male-dominated leadership models may prioritize rationality and assertiveness, sometimes at the expense of emotional

engagement. By incorporating empathy into their leadership styles, women can build trust and rapport with their constituents, enhancing their effectiveness as leaders.

- **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Women often advocate for more inclusive decision-making processes that prioritize diverse perspectives. They recognize the importance of representing marginalized voices and may actively seek to involve individuals from different backgrounds, including minority groups and underrepresented communities. This contrasts with traditional models that may overlook the importance of inclusivity, leading to policies that do not address the needs of all citizens. By championing inclusive practices, women leaders can drive more equitable and comprehensive policy solutions.
- **Focus on Social Issues:** Women in leadership positions frequently prioritize social issues such as education, health care, and gender equality. Their personal experiences often inform their policy agendas, prompting them to address challenges that disproportionately affect women and marginalized populations. This focus on social justice may differ from traditional male leadership, which may emphasize economic or security issues. By advocating for social issues, women leaders can bring attention to critical areas that enhance the well-being of society as a whole.
- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Women leaders often demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges. Many have navigated significant obstacles, including gender bias and systemic discrimination, which has fostered a strong capacity for problem-solving and innovation. This resilience allows women to adapt their leadership strategies to dynamic political environments, making them effective in addressing complex challenges. In contrast, traditional male leaders may be less accustomed to navigating such barriers, potentially limiting their adaptability in diverse contexts.
- **Transformational Leadership:** Women leaders frequently embody transformational leadership qualities, aiming to inspire and motivate their followers toward a shared vision. This style emphasizes vision, inspiration, and the development

of others, creating an environment where individuals feel empowered to contribute to collective goals. Traditional male leadership models may sometimes focus more on transactional approaches, where power dynamics and authority play a more significant role. By fostering transformational leadership, women can cultivate a culture of empowerment and innovation within their teams and organizations.

The unique leadership styles and approaches employed by women in politics reflect a departure from traditional male-dominated models, emphasizing collaboration, empathy, inclusivity, and social advocacy. By leveraging these distinctive qualities, women leaders can contribute to more effective governance and policy-making that better serves diverse populations. Recognizing and valuing these differences is essential for fostering an inclusive political environment that empowers women and enhances the overall quality of leadership in democratic societies.

The Impact of Intersecting Identities on Women's Experiences in Political Leadership

The experiences of women in political leadership are significantly shaped by their intersecting identities, including race, ethnicity, class, and other social factors. These identities interact in complex ways, influencing the challenges women face as they navigate political landscapes. This section analyzes how these intersecting identities affect women's experiences in leadership roles and the unique barriers they encounter.

- **Race and Ethnicity:** Women of color often confront additional layers of discrimination that are not typically experienced by their white counterparts. Racial and ethnic biases can result in women of color facing both gender and racial stereotypes, which may undermine their credibility and capabilities as leaders. For instance, they might be subjected to microaggressions or overt discrimination in political spaces, which can diminish their authority and hinder their ability to gain support. Moreover, political narratives around race can overshadow their contributions and reduce their visibility in leadership roles, making it more challenging for them to be recognized as legitimate candidates for office.
- **Class and Socioeconomic Status:** Class background plays a crucial role in shaping women's access to political leadership.

Women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may lack the financial resources, networks, and educational opportunities that are often essential for successful political campaigning. This economic disadvantage can limit their ability to run for office or engage in political activities, thereby perpetuating their underrepresentation in leadership positions. Furthermore, women from marginalized socioeconomic backgrounds may prioritize issues directly affecting their communities, such as poverty alleviation and access to education, but may struggle to gain traction within political systems that prioritize more mainstream agendas.

- **Intersectionality:** The concept of intersectionality, coined by Kimberli Crenshaw, emphasizes how various forms of social stratification—such as race, gender, class, and sexuality—intersect to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege. For women in politics, understanding intersectionality is essential to grasp the multifaceted nature of the challenges they encounter. For example, a Black woman may face discrimination not only because of her gender but also due to her race, leading to compounded barriers in her political career. This intersectional approach highlights the inadequacy of one-size-fits-all solutions to address the challenges faced by women in leadership, underscoring the need for tailored strategies that consider their diverse experiences.
- **Cultural Expectations and Norms:** Cultural expectations surrounding gender roles can vary significantly across different racial and ethnic groups, impacting how women leaders are perceived and treated. For instance, women from cultures that emphasize collectivism may face pressure to prioritize family and community obligations over political ambitions. These cultural norms can create internal conflicts for women striving for leadership positions, as they navigate societal expectations alongside their personal aspirations. Additionally, the way women leaders are scrutinized can differ based on their cultural background, with women of color often facing harsher judgments regarding their leadership styles and effectiveness.
- **Networks and Support Systems:** Access to political networks and support systems can vary greatly based on intersecting identities. Women from privileged backgrounds may have

easier access to influential networks, mentors, and financial resources, which can facilitate their political ascendance. In contrast, women of color and those from lower socioeconomic classes may have limited access to such networks, making it more challenging to gain visibility and support within political structures. This lack of access can perpetuate a cycle of underrepresentation, as women who are not integrated into existing political networks may struggle to break through into leadership roles.

- **Policy Priorities:** The intersection of race, ethnicity, and class can also influence the policy priorities of women leaders. Those from marginalized communities often bring unique perspectives and advocate for issues that may be overlooked by more privileged counterparts. For instance, women of color may focus on policies addressing systemic inequalities, healthcare access, or educational disparities, reflecting their lived experiences. However, their ability to influence policy discussions may be limited by the dominant narratives within political institutions, which may prioritize issues that align more closely with the interests of privileged groups.

In summary, intersecting identities significantly impact women's experiences in political leadership by shaping the challenges they face and the support they receive. Women of color, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and others with intersecting identities encounter unique barriers that require nuanced approaches to address effectively. Recognizing and addressing these complexities is essential for creating an inclusive political environment that empowers all women to thrive in leadership roles. By understanding the interplay of these identities, political systems can develop targeted strategies to enhance representation and support for diverse women leaders, ultimately enriching the democratic process.

Findings:

This research has illuminated several key findings regarding the challenges and triumphs of women in political leadership, highlighting the complexities of their experiences shaped by systemic barriers, unique leadership styles, and intersecting identities.

- **Systemic Barriers:** The study confirmed that women face significant systemic barriers in accessing political leadership roles, including societal attitudes that perpetuate gender

stereotypes, institutional discrimination that favours male candidates, and electoral challenges that hinder women's campaigns. These barriers are often exacerbated for women of color and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who encounter additional layers of discrimination.

- **Unique Leadership Styles:** Women in politics often employ collaborative and inclusive leadership styles that prioritize empathy, emotional intelligence, and social advocacy. These approaches contrast with traditional, hierarchical male-dominated leadership models, demonstrating that women leaders can foster environments conducive to diverse participation and innovative problem-solving.
- **Impact of Intersectionality:** The findings underscored the importance of intersectionality in understanding women's political experiences. Women of color, those from various ethnic backgrounds, and those of differing socioeconomic statuses face distinct challenges that shape their political journeys. Their intersecting identities significantly influence their access to resources, networks, and visibility within political spheres.
- **Resilience and Advocacy:** Women in political leadership often exhibit remarkable resilience, employing their unique experiences to advocate for marginalized communities. Their emphasis on social issues such as gender equality, health care, and education reflect their commitment to addressing the needs of diverse populations and contributing to more equitable governance.
- **Need for Systemic Change:** The research highlights the necessity for systemic reforms that promote gender parity and support women in politics. This includes implementing gender quotas, enhancing mentorship programs, and fostering inclusive political environments that value women's contributions.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the findings of this research reveal that while women in political leadership face substantial challenges, they also demonstrate remarkable strength, resilience, and innovative approaches that enrich the political landscape. Their unique leadership

styles, informed by their diverse experiences, contribute to more effective governance and inclusive policy-making. However, significant barriers remain that hinder women's access to leadership roles, particularly for those with intersecting identities. To foster a more equitable political environment, it is imperative to address the systemic and cultural barriers that inhibit women's participation. This involves not only promoting policies that enhance representation but also challenging societal attitudes that undervalue women's leadership. By recognizing and valuing the diverse experiences and contributions of women leaders, societies can work towards a more inclusive political framework that empowers all individuals to thrive in leadership roles. Ultimately, the journey toward gender equality in political leadership is ongoing. Continued advocacy, research, and policy development are essential to create pathways for future generations of women leaders. By addressing the challenges identified in this study, we can contribute to a political landscape that not only embraces diversity but also harnesses the full potential of women's leadership to foster social progress and democratic governance.

References:

1. Alexander, J. C. (2010). The performance of politics: Obama's victory and the democratic struggle for power. Oxford University Press.
2. Angerholzer III, M. (2014). Triumphs and Tragedies of the Modern Congress: Case Studies in Legislative Leadership. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
3. Brill, A. (Ed.). (1995). A rising public voice: Women in politics worldwide. Feminist Press at CUNY.
4. Brown, A. (2014). The myth of the strong leader: Political leadership in the modern age. Basic Books.
5. Chiriga, J., Chitiga, R., & Rukato, H. (2024). Challenges and Triumphs for Women Leaders in African Diplomacy. Key Issues in African Diplomacy: Developments and Achievements, 221.
6. Foley, M. (2013). Political leadership: Themes, contexts, and critiques. Oxford University Press, USA.
7. Gillard, J., & Okonjo-Iweala, N. (2022). Women and leadership: Real lives, real lessons. MIT Press.
8. Gunasekara, V. I. (2012). Triumph over tragedy: International pressure, women's movements, and empowerment in post-conflict states (Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University).

9. Harmer, E., Savigny, H., & Ward, O. (2017). 'Are you tough enough?'Performing gender in the UK leadership debates 2015. Media, Culture & Society, 39(7), 960-975.

10. Klenke, K. (2004). Women and leadership: A contextual perspective. Springer publishing company.

11. O'Connor, K. (Ed.). (2010). Gender and women's leadership: A reference handbook. Sage Publications.

12. Paxton, P., Hughes, M. M., & Barnes, T. D. (2020). Women, politics, and power: A global perspective. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

13. Paxton, P., Kunovich, S., & Hughes, M. M. (2007). Gender in politics. Annu. Rev. Sociol., 33(1), 263-284.

14. Witt, L., Matthews, G., & Paget, K. M. (1995). Running as a woman: Gender and power in American politics. Simon and Schuster.

15. Willner, A. R. (1985). The spellbinders: Charismatic political leadership. Yale University Press.

16. Zagarri, R. (2007). Revolutionary backlash: Women and politics in the early American Republic. University of Pennsylvania Press.

33

Women's Welfare in India: Removing Social Customs and Strengthening Constitutional Rights

Nirmal Das

Abstract

"Just as a bird cannot fly with one wing only,a Nation cannot march forward if the women are left behind "....

Swami Vivekananda

Women's welfare in India has seen significant strides, especially through efforts to dismantle restrictive social customs and enforce constitutional rights. Historically, societal norms like Sati, child marriage, dowry, and the preference for male children have created barriers to women's health, education, and economic opportunities. However, with the support of governmental policies, NGOs, and social reformers, many of these regressive practices have been challenged.

One of the most impactful changes has been through education and awareness initiatives, which have aimed at altering mindsets and empowering women at grassroots levels. Programs focused on literacy, vocational training, and digital education have equipped women to make informed life choices and gain financial independence.

Legally, India's Constitution enshrines equal rights for men and women. So the inclusion of the equality clause in the Indian constitution has largely contributed to the achievement of this goal. The equality provision ensures equality before the law and equal protection of the laws irrespective of race, religion, caste, sex, rich-poor etc . Laws such as Sati prohibition (1829), the Dowry Prohibition Act(1961), the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, and the Protection of Women from

Domestic Violence Act are examples of legal frameworks that uphold women's welfare and protect against abusive practices. Additionally, more recent reforms, like granting women equal inheritance rights, have strengthened their financial autonomy and addressed long-standing gender inequities.

Furthermore, government programs like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, which aims to save and educate the girl child, and the Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme, designed to empower rural women, have helped improve access to education, health scheme, and employment. Women's self-help groups, supported through initiatives like the National Rural Livelihood Mission, have provided platforms for economic and social empowerment.

The path forward calls for continued efforts to enforce these rights, address gaps in education and healthcare, and ensure that societal perceptions evolve to fully embrace the role of women as equal and active contributors to India's growth and development.

Introduction

"*The wife is half the men,*

The best of friends,

The root of the three ends of life,

And of all that will help in the other world."

-The Mahabharata (IJFMR240218338, Volume 6, Issue 2, March-April 2024)

We, the people of India. through this statement, the written document of Indian's constitution has given importance to the idea of equality for all people. Because constitution never divided Indian society on the basis of gender. So, Indian Constitution is the basic document of a country having a special legal holiness, which set up the state framework and the principal functions of the organs of the Government of a State. Women's welfare in India has long been a pivotal yet complex issue, deeply intertwined with the country's cultural, social, and historical fabric. For centuries, Indian women have faced various systemic social discrimination rooted in regressive social customs, patriarchal norms, and entrenched gender roles. While progress has been made through constitutional and legislative reforms, significant challenges remain in dismantling age-old practices that hinder gender equality. Women's welfare today requires not only the removal of discriminatory customs but also the strengthening and

implementation of constitutional rights to ensure justice, liberty, equality, dignity and empowerment. Although, Women's equality is enshrined in various parts of the Constitution, including the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, Fundamental Duties, and other provisions. But The Indian Constitution plays a critical role in promoting women's equity and empowering them within society. Despite societal challenges and persistent gender inequalities, the Constitution and various social reforms have laid a strong foundation for women's rights and equity in India. Historically, Indian society has been patriarchal, limiting women's freedoms in social, cultural, economic, and political spheres. Practices such as child marriage, dowry, sati, widow, feticide and female infanticide are rooted in deeply entrenched in social customs. For centuries, these practices placed severe restrictions on women's opportunities for educational, personal behaviours and financial independence. Historically, Indian society has imposed restrictive practices such as child marriage, dowry, widow and sati, which relegated women to a social discrimination. Although reforms during colonial and post-independence periods, including the abolition of sati, widow and prohibition of child marriage, marked critical milestones, many social customs persist in various forms. Practices like honor killings, gender-based violence, and unequal inheritance laws reflect the deep-seated biases that continue to curtail women's freedom and opportunities. These customs are often perpetuated by socio-cultural traditions that prioritize family honor, community norms, and male dominance, thus undermining the principles of gender equality enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

The Historical Context of Women's Status in India

The historical context of women's welfare and the removal of oppressive social customs in India is deeply rooted in its cultural, religious, cultural and social evolution. Historically, Indian society was patriarchal, but women's roles in Indian society were largely confined to domestic spheres. However, early Vedic society (circa 1500–500 BCE) recognized women's contributions, with texts like the Rig Veda mentioning women as scholars and leaders. Over time, societal norms became more restrictive, especially during the later Vedic period, leading to practices like child marriage and restrictions on women's education.

During the medieval period, the status of women further declined due to invasions and political instability, which fostered practices like purdah (seclusion of women) and jauhar (self-immolation by women to avoid capture). The rigid caste system and religious orthodoxy entrenched customs like sati (widow immolation), child marriage, and prohibition of widow remarriage, which severely curtailed women's rights and freedoms.

The 19th century marked a turning point in addressing these regressive practices. Some social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Jyotirao Phule, B. R. Ambedkar, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Mother Teresa, Narayana Guru, Periyar E. V. Ramasamy others movements against sati, widow marriage, child marriage, and caste-based discrimination etc. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's efforts culminated in the abolition of sati through the Bengal Sati Regulation Act of 1829. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar championed widow remarriage, leading to the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule focused on educating girls and fighting caste-based inequalities etc.

The Indian freedom struggle also contributed significantly to women's welfare. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi encouraged women's participation in political movements, helping them break traditional barriers. Women leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, and Kasturba Gandhi others became symbols of empowerment, advocating for equal rights and social reforms.

Post-independence, the Indian Constitution (1950) enshrined gender equality and aimed to dismantle discriminatory practices. The Hindu Code Bills, including the Hindu Marriage Act (1955) and the Hindu Succession Act (1956), granted women rights in marriage, inheritance, and property. Later, the Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) aimed to combat deep-rooted issues like dowry harassment and domestic abuse. Despite legal reforms, social customs rooted in patriarchy persisted, necessitating continued advocacy and activism. The women's movement in India gained momentum in the 1970s, focusing on issues like violence against women, workplace equality, and reproductive rights. Organizations like the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and campaigns like the anti-dowry movement became pivotal in driving change. The late 20th and early 21st centuries saw greater awareness of issues like female infanticide, honor

killings, and human trafficking. Policies like central government the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and women's scheme for every state in India initiative and the reservation of seats for women in parliament election, state assembly and local governance furthered the cause of women's welfare.

Social Customs Impeding Women's Welfare

Sati system abolition: Raja Rammohan Roy was the great Hindu reformer in Bengal. He dedicated his entire life to eliminating social customs. So he always try to suppress many prevalent social evils like sati , polygamy, child marriage, female infanticide etc. But Sati was an ancient Hindu custom, according to which a wife immolate herself at the funeral pyre of husband. Therefore, Raja Ram Mohan Roy was strictly opposed this system of Sati. At last, Raja Ram Mohan Roy's campaign against Sati was quite successful, as the Governor-General William Bentinck abolished the practice of Sati in 1829. On December 4, 1829, The Bengal Sati Regulation act was passed by the Governor-General Lord William Bentinck. This act banned the Sati practice in all jurisdictions of British India After Sati was banned and Rammohan Roy also opposed polygamy and established schools for educating the women of the society.

Dowry System abolition : The dowry system has been a significant barrier to women's welfare in India. Although banned by the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, it persists in various forms, often leading to domestic violence, financial exploitation, and even dowry deaths.

Caste Discrimination: The caste system, although officially abolished, still influences many aspects of life, especially in rural areas. Practices like untouchability and caste-based violence remain problematic.

Child Marriage abolition : Though the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, set the legal age for marriage at 18 for women, child marriage remains prevalent, especially in rural areas. Early marriage restricts girls' educational opportunities and health, reinforcing cycles of poverty and dependency.

Social Gender Discrimination abolition : Many families still have a preference for sons, leading to gender-based discrimination in healthcare, nutrition, and education. Sex-selective abortions and female infanticide are issues reflecting this bias, despite the existence of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994.

Honor-Based Practices and Violence : Women face strict limitations in terms of marital choice and personal fre222 if women step outside prescribed social roles.

Caste and Gender Discrimination: Social customs related to caste often intersect with gender discrimination, where women from lower castes face double oppression. Issues such as untouchability and caste-based violence persist, impeding the welfare of many women.

Widow system abolition: The Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, also known as Act XV of 1856, was a significant piece of legislation passed in British India. In traditional Hindu society, widows were often subjected to social ostracism, denied property rights, and forced to live a life of austerity. The practice of widow remarriage was largely discouraged and considered taboo. Reformers like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar played a pivotal role in advocating for this law. He cited ancient Hindu texts to argue that widow remarriage was permissible and fought against orthodox opposition.

Constitutional Provisions and Legal Safeguards for Women's Welfare

The Indian Constitution provides a strong legal foundation for women's equity. It acknowledges their right to equality and dignity and lays down measures for their protection, empowerment and support of well progress. So, Indian Constitution lays a strong foundation for ensuring women's equality through its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, Fundamental Duties and other various provisions. These provisions seek to secure justice, dignity, and equal opportunities for women. However, the full realization of these rights requires effective implementation, societal change, and a continued commitment to gender justice and addressing the socio-cultural barriers that women face in Indian society. Some key constitutional articles that focus on women's rights include:

1. Article 14: This article ensures equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. This very important provision provides equal legal protection to women against any women-based crime.
2. Article 15: (i) The state shall not discriminate against any citizen of India on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth etc [15(1)].

(ii) In this article, no one should create any sort of discrimination within the territory of India and as per article 15(3) the state has the authority to make any special provision for women.

3. Article 16(2): This article ensures equal employment opportunity to every citizen of India. There should not be any discrimination or be ineligible for any employment or office under the State on the ground of gender.

4. Article-19: This article guarantees to all the citizens both men and women " the right to freedom of speech and expression". Thus, everyone has a fundamental right to form his own opinion on any issue of general concern.

5. Article 21:((i)This article deals with right to life has been expanded to include the right to Life with Dignity. This provision has been invoked to safeguard the rights of women such as right to divorce, to live a life free from violence and the right to safe abortions. Or this article deals with right to women to be treated with decency and dignity.

   (ii) Article 21A deals with the right to education guarantees free and compulsory education to all children between the ages on 6-14. So, these right is particularly crucial for ensuring equal educational opportunities for girls and promoting sex equality in access to education.

6. Article 23 and 24 : This article deals with prohibits traffic in human beings, forced labour etc(23). So, this article deals with the protects women from practices such as trafficking, forced prostitution and bonded labour , ensuring their safety and dignity .

7. Articles 32 and 226: This articles ensures that women can seek justice and remedies if their rights are violated . So, these specific fundamental rights, certain laws have been enacted to provide additional protection to women in India.

8. Article 39: Article 39(a) of directive principles of state policy ensures and directs a state to secure for men and women equality right of adequate means of livelihood.

   Article 39(d) goes a step further to ensure equal pay for equal work for both men and women, aiming to eliminate wage disparities based on gender.

Article 39A directs the State to promote justice, on the basis of equal opportunity, ensuring that no citizen is denied access to justice due to economic or other disabilities. This articles collectively work towards establishing economic justice and equal opportunities for women.

9. Article 42: Article 42 of constitution of India casts a duty on every employer to ensure just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. In reality the position and treatment of women in corporate offices is really bad and in fact they are exploited by their seniors and bosses. In this scenario the provisions of article 42 are very important and now it is the duty of employer to provide good working conditions to all the employees.
10. Article 44: This article provide to secure a uniform civil code for all citizens, irrespective of religion, aiming to promote sex equality and eliminate discriminatory personal laws that affect women's rights.
11. Article 46 : This article emphasizes the need for special measures to uplift women from marginalized communities through educational opportunities.
12. Article 51A: Articles 51A(e) emphasis of the Constitution lays down fundamental duties for all citizens. It stipulates that all citizens have a duty to promote harmony and the moral duty to renounce practices which are derogatory to the dignity of women.
14. Article 243: (i) Article 243 D (3) provide One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women.

(ii) Article 243-D (4) provide One-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women.

(iii) Article 243 T (3) provide for One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women.

(iv) Article 243 T (4) provide for the offices of chairpersons in the Municipalities shall be reserved for women in such manner as the State Legislature may provide.

Legal Reforms Aiding Women's Welfare:-

Several laws have been enacted to address specific issues affecting women. Key legislations include:

The Hindu Succession Act,1956

The Dowry Prohibition Act,1961

The Maternity Benefit Act,1961

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act,1971

The Equal Remuneration Act,1976

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act,1986

The National Commission for Women Act,1990

India is signatory to United Nations Convention on Right of Child (UNCRC) since 1992

In 1992, 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts which mandated 33.3 percent reservation for women in Panchayati Raj and municipalities Institutions.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act,2005

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act,2006

The Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act,2013

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015

Key Social Movements and Government Initiatives

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter): This flagship initiative aims to address the declining child sex ratio and promote girls' education. It combines advocacy, policy support, and community engagement to create a supportive environment for girls.

The Self-Help Group (SHG) Movement : Through the formation of self-help groups, women in rural areas gain financial independence, social support, and improved bargaining power. These groups enable women to access microcredit, undertake small-scale enterprises, and contribute to family income, shifting their role from a dependent to an economic contributor.

The Women's Reservation Bill : Parliament of India passed The Constitutional (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, reserves one-third of all seats for women in Lok Sabha, State legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, including those reserved for SCs and STs The bill aims to reserve 33% of seats in the Parliament and State Assemblies for women. Although pending, the bill highlights the ongoing debate on political representation and aims to amplify women's voices in policymaking. Parliament of India passed 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992, mandated all states to reserve one-third of seats for women in local bodies. This Article 243D (2) and Article 243T (2) gave reservation to women in Panchayat and Municipalities, respectively.

Social Media Movements : India is one of the largest social media markets in the world and largest numbers of women's user social media, for example twitter, facebook, Instagram, whatwapp, telegram etc. In recent years, movements like #MeToo in India have provided a platform for women to share experiences of harassment and demand accountability. These movements help break the silence around issues that were traditionally stigmatized and often concealed. The social media movement like "#Me Too movement" has positively influence on the motive to control sexual harassment against women. This research shows that awareness of sexual crimes against women can be increased and the participation in these kinds of social movements a sexual harassment intention could be controlled. Hence the conceptual model / framework as suggested in the present study vindicates that mass communication such as #Me Too movement is able to create awareness among the peoples.

The Role of Education and Employment: Education is crucial for the empowerment of women. An educated woman can make informed decisions about her health, marriage, and finances, which has a ripple effect on her family and community. Despite advances in female literacy, gaps remain, particularly in rural areas where conservative values often discourage girls' education. Employment is another essential factor. Women's participation in the workforce contributes to financial independence, fosters self-confidence, and shifts the balance of power in their favor. However, India has one of the lowest female labor force participation rates in Asia, partly due to social customs that restrict women's mobility and discourage work outside the home.

Conclusion

Removing harmful social customs in Indian society is a complicated procedure that requires addressing deeply rooted traditions, beliefs, and practices that often perpetuate inequality, discrimination, and injustice. These customs, some of which are ancient, can be influenced by factors such as caste, religion, colour, patriarchy, communal and economic structure. Overcoming these customs is crucial for creating a more just and equitable society, especially in the context of women's rights, education, and social mobility. The Indian Constitution is a comprehensive document that seeks to ensure justice, equality, and the protection of the rights of all citizens, including women. The Constitution not only mandates equality but also recognizes the need for special provisions for women to address historical and societal disadvantages. In India, the issue of women's welfare and the removal of harmful social customs is deeply intertwined with cultural, religious, and historical factors. Over the years, significant progress has been made in terms of legal frameworks, education, and awareness campaigns aimed at improving the status of women. However, there are still many social customs and practices that hinder gender equality and women's well -being.

REFERENCES

1. Laxmikanth M, Indian Polity, McGraw Hill Education (India) Private Limited,Chennai, 2017 P-4.1-4.7, 7.1-10.4,
2. Laxmikanth M, Public Administration, McGraw Hill Education (India) Private Limited, New Delhi, 2014, P-971-973.
3. Ghosh Peu, Indian Government and Politics, PHI Learning Private Limited, Delhi, 2018, P-43-92,456-460.
4. Gauba O.P, Indian political thought, National Paperbacks, New Delhi, 2020, P-1-199 5.Rajput, Pam, (2001), "Women's Political Participation in India: An Agenda for Empowerment", Sage Publications, New Delhi.
6. Nora Shimhan, Sakuntala, Empowering Women, An Alternative Strategy From Rural India, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1999.
7. Kashyap Neha ,(March-April, 2024), Gender Equality and Women's Rights: A Study in Indian Constitution, International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR), E-ISSN: 2582-2160, Volume 6, Issue 2, P-1-10.

8. Michael Prof: SJ, 2020 4 April, A STUDY OF WOMEN RIGHTS IN INDIA, International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT), ISSN: 2320-2882, P-360-365.

9. Rout Dr. Naresh, Bez Dr. Jayashree ,(January ,2017), Women's Rights and Violence in India : A Study of Constitutional Safeguards, Odisha Review, ISSN 0970-8669, P-15-29.

10. Mandal Subhash Chandra ,(May 2018), Customary and Legal Status of Indian Women, Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR), ISSN-2349-5162, P-720-724.

34

Bridging Tradition and Modernity: The Saga of Empowerment Journey of Sabar Women in Purulia

Dr. Munai Paramanik

Abstract

The role of women in the 21st century has not evolved overnight. There have been struggles, differences in opinion, realizations, redefining of roles and so much more. Women has always been ignored and underestimated. In this male dominated society, women have always suffered. But we also see an opposite picture in tribal society regarding the status of women. In a tribal society the role of women is appreciable and important and relatively more crucial and respectful than the so-called Modern society.

The Sabar tribe of Purulia district popularly known as Kharias are probably the backward and marginalized tribal community settled in West Bengal. The main areas that have been highlighted in this paper are Social, Economic, Educational and Political status of Sabar women in Purulia district. This study also deals with the problems faced by the Sabar Women in their society and how they are moving towards empowerment by solving these problems.

Keywords: *Scheduled Tribe, Sabar Tribes, Empowerment, Education, Economic, Social, Political Participation*

Introduction

The role of women in the 21st century has not evolved overnight. There have been struggles, differences in opinion, realizations, redefining of roles and so much more. The fact that men and women are an integral part of the society and that the growth and development of the society cannot happen if the interest of the 'weaker' section is ignored has been acknowledged just a few years ago. The role of

women in the development and growth of society has been a remarkable one, but has always been ignored and underestimated. Women's struggles for an equal and respectable existence is a historical phenomenon. They are struggling against certain paradigms of inferiority and gender inequality experienced by all women throughout the World. They have been constantly fighting to get rid of the clutches of the patriarchal mindset which believes that women are born only to satisfy the needs and demands of the males and nothing more than that. It is important to integrate the interest and well-being of women into the mainstream.

To overcome this grim scenario 'empowerment' has become a familiar term with the International development agencies, Government and the Civil Society. The word 'empowerment' simply means a social process that enables people to get power in each and every field of their own lives and in society. It's a means of supporting the deprived to derive their power and position and the equal rights which they truly deserve. In other words, Empowerment is a social action process that promotes participation of people, organisations, and communities towards the goal of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life and social justice". So, women empowerment can be defined as a multi-dimensional social project designated to enable women to realise their self-worth, identity and power and to improve their socio, religio, Political, legal and economical as well as spiritual strength to ensure liberty and equality in the border aspect of society. This research paper purported to present the scenario of women empowerment as well as Sabar Women empowerment in the context of 21st century India.

This saga of suffering and repression, not to speak of extreme cases of gendercide that annihilates females systematically, bleeds women in the mainstream as well as in the list talked about tribal society too. Undoubtedly tribal women are better placed and empowered in many ways then their counterparts. They enjoy and share the economic burden as well as take part in every decision making within her family. However, from the yardstick of materialistic development the situation is far worse and vulnerable for tribal women than for men as females are stuck in the authority structure that denies them equal share of benefits in all vital spheres of life from education to employment. In the tribal world, especially among tribal women, education has always been considered a matter of less importance

due to excessive pressure they have to bear for earning wages out of exploitative or hazardous jobs.

The main areas that have been highlighted in this paper are Social, Economic, Educational and Political status of Sabar women in Purulia district. This study also deals with the problems faced by the Sabar Women in their society and how they are moving towards empowerment by solving these problems. This perception is clearly visible that lends value to their struggle to attain empowerment in which the significance of education has become a weapon for them. This new transformation is a key to resist their marginalization and simultaneously it pulls them towards new aspirations to enhance their living conditions by acquiring capability to obtain a good employment opportunity.

Objectives of the Study

This paper aims to analyze the status of the Sabar women with special reference to their education, economic and social life, and political participation. However from a materialistic standpoint, they Still lag behind in important parameters like from education and decent standard of living. In this context the researcher has conducted a survey in Purulia District to find out how much dignity and rights Sabar women currently enjoy and how independently they are living in their tribal society.

Methodology of the study

In the present study the researcher used the Descriptive cum Survey Method.The researcher culled some primary data drawn from interviews and secondary data drawn from published articles, journals etc. The researcher also conducted field visits and collected data through note-taking, photography and group discussion with the people of Sabar women in Purulia district. In that sense, the researcher also used observation methods meant to focus on their social units, beliefs, culture practices, and attitudes. All these have been instrumental to interpret the conditions of the Sabar women which has been used for the purpose of analysis.

Tribes in Purulia District:

Purulia is one of the most backward tribal districts in the country.Here 540652 people belong to different tribal groups, which consist of 18.45% of the total population of the district as well as

10.52% of the total STs population of West Bengal (census 2011). Most of the tribes of Purulia belong to the Proto-Australoid race with dark skin, sunken nose and lower forehead.Tribes of this area basically speak in santhali, gond and kheria dialects.

Five major Tribes in Purulia District

Sl. No	Tribe	Percentage
1	Santhal	60%
2	Bhumij	18%
3	Sabar	7%
4	Munda	6%
5	Birhor	1%

About the Sabar Tribe:

The Sabar tribe of Purulia district popularly known as *Kharias* are probably the backward and marginalized tribal community settled in West Bengal. The hill *Kharias* of Purulia are called by local people in different names viz *'Kharias' 'Sabar' 'Bandigar'*. Often they are addressed as *'Kheryas'* but they prefer to be treated as *'Sabar'*. This is because they consider themselves to be the descendants of *'Sabar'*. In fact, the majority of them use the surname of *'Sabar'* (Mukhopadhyay, 1992). They are the earliest as well as the backward and primitive tribe of India. Most of them traditionally engaged in gathering jungle foods or selling jungle produce like firewood, dry leaf, mats, brooms, fish-traps etc. Thus they also collect food materials like fruit, vegetables, tubers and roots from the forest and they also continue the traditional method of hunting. One of the major economic pursuits based upon the selling handicrafts such as broom-stick, fish traps made of bamboo.Sabar tribes are primitive forest dependent tribes. They have not been able to adapt to the modern civilization of the 21st century. Even now they are known to the civilized people as a violent and criminal tribe. Maybe the Sabar tribes love to live in a deserted forest away from the locality.

The Sabar community were declared a 'criminal tribe' during the colonial period and still, they bear the brunt of the stigma of criminality. Social ostracism and stigma have kept them away from the social mainstream. Their exploitation and exclusion is discernible from all

angles. The Criminal Tribal Act (CTA) 1871, however repealed after India's independence in 1949, and the de-notified Habitual Offender Act (HOA) enacted in 1952 are pitted against them. They continue to suffer from social deprivation and segregation due to alleged 'Stigma of Criminality' (Ghosh & Guchhait, 2017). Thus, they were systematically excluded from the mainstream and their alienation became a barrier to their inclusion.They were confined in the hilly and forest tracts of South- eastern Purulia, Paschim Medinipur, Mayurbhanj District of Odisha, and East and West Singhbhum District of Jharkhand, broadly known as Jungle Mohal.

Journey of the History of Women Empowerment with respect to empowerment of Sabar women:

"Women empowerment means making girls and women strong and confident. It's about giving them the same chances as boys and men to do what they want in life. Every human whether male or female should be treated equally at all levels but women are treated otherwise. A man can speak up his mind and make his own decisions in life whereas a woman has a limitation on her imagination as well. Women are not even allowed to imagine or aim higher in life because their role is only limited to cooking, cleaning and taking care of the family.A large segment of Indian womanhood still suffers deprivation and discriminatory attitudes. In a world where a woman is dominated by society, it has become more vital to empower women. What exactly is women's empowerment? When women are given authority to handle their personal, educational and professional lives, given equality in society and the ability to raise the voice against violence, then they are truly empowered.

But we also see an opposite picture in tribal society regarding the status of women. In a tribal society the role of women is appreciable and important and relatively more crucial and respectful than the so-called Modern society. Undoubtedly Tribal women are better placed and empowered in many ways than their counterparts. They enjoy and share the economic burden as well as take part in every decision making within her family. Tribes are the holders of unique languages, knowledge systems and beliefs and they possess invaluable knowledge of practices for the sustainable management of natural resources. They have a special relation to their traditional land. Their ancestral land has a fundamental importance for their collective physical and cultural survival as a distinct people. They hold their own diverse concepts of

development, based on their traditional values, visions, needs and priorities. Adivasi people have always been there in our country yet most of the people here are unaware of their existence or are simply ignorant towards their existence and customs. The amazing point is that Indian tribals are not backward as many of us might assume; instead their beliefs and practices are fraught with signs of progressive thinking as evident in the absence of dowry, no caste division, even divorce and widow remarriage are socially accepted among them. They are an exemplary society when it comes to social practices yet they live a life of poverty and discrimination. Tribal people's lower achievement may be attributed to their lower level of their aspiration. They are yet to achieve standards of academic and non-academic achievements compared to non-tribal people. It is natural to aspire to be equal with non-tribal people. But they are lagging behind non-tribal people due to the want of motivating agents like serious aspiration and strong determination.

Social status of Sabar women in Purulia District:

Status of women is one of the significant reflections of the level of progress of a society. The United Nations (1975) has defined the status of women as – "Conjunction of position a woman occupies as a worker, student, wife, mother … of the power and prestige attached to these positions, and of the right and duties she is expected to exercise" (The United Nations, 1975). Undoubtedly, society cannot flourish without the enrichment of women. The concept of status is intimately associated with the concept of role. It refers to the behaviour that is expected of persons who hold a particular position.

The Sabar women have a peculiar position and status in their society. The role of women is substantial and important and relatively more crucial and respectful than in so called civil society. They have been enjoying and sharing the economic burden as well as every decision within her family.Women's role is most appreciated in the family. The whole responsibility of rearing the children is upon them. Apart from handicrafts, they have rich culture, customs and indigenous knowledge which have enough potential and variety to influence the modern civilized society considerably. For example, equal rights of man and woman are well-recognized in Sabar society. Their women are usually more intelligent, active and enterprising than men. The Sabar women enjoy more freedom in society. Men and women of their community together enter the forest in order to collect food.

Moreover, a living example of women's freedom is 'Sangha', a traditional remarriage system. Basically Sangha means remarriage of a widow or divorce couples. Even an unmarried woman can bear children or she can live comfortably with her child in the Sabar society. It is the testimony of their exceptionally bold and liberal outlook to overcome the taboo. In our so-called civilized modern society we have to institute various committees and laws to propagate the message of equal gender rights, freedom or empowerment of women. It is conceivable to offer this type of freedom to women in our society. Unlike us, most of the persons of the Sabar tribe are uneducated and they do not fit with modern notion of civilization. Yet, their communal social system, their culture, rituals, high status enjoyed by women, and the continuous struggle for survival really overwhelm us with fascination and benign satisfaction. They really encourage us to fight adversity and move forward.

Economic status of Sabar women in Purulia District:

The Sabar women in their society have been contributing positively to the local economy by participating actively along with the men in the pursuit of economic activities to earn livelihood. In reality, women are seen to do more hard work in the fields than men. They work for the whole family from dawn to dusk starting from cleaning of house and utensils, fetching water, collection of fuel wood and vegetation, cooking and nurturing children.They participate in all agricultural operations except ploughing. They work in all sectors of indigenous cottage industries, tribal arts and production of artifacts. They have no formal education or professional training in handicrafts but nevertheless their skill and expertise in making handmade goods is no less proficient. In the market-place tribal women are seen as vendors as well as buyers especially in the weekly market, a scene normally not found in non- tribal communities.

Educational status of Sabar women in Purulia District

The tribal women society suffers disproportionately from mass-illiteracy. In connection with this, Lewis and Lockheed (2007) confirmed the distress situation of tribal female education and wrote – "Among the tribal community, tribal girls form the most neglected group, and are least likely to be educated" (Lewis and Lockheed, 2007). Moreover, it was observed in all my studied villages that the traditional and conservative parents do not prefer to continue their daughter's education at the time of puberty. They do not prefer to go

for higher education because they consider that the higher education curriculum is difficult so it is better to stay at home to help mother in household work and collection of roots and tubers from the forest. The young girls who are studying at the primary level in school hardly learn anything in school and they don't study at home also.

The Tribal and indigenous community of India are historically alienated from the development process as well as their inclusion in education remains in a pitiable stage even after seven decades of India's independence. Considering the fact that Tribal and Indigenous communities are one of the most deprived and marginalized groups with respect to education, special care is needed in delivering elementary education to them. Ironically, the lack of tribal socio-economic background and cultural knowledge of the educational policy makers has resulted in them being far lagged behind in education only from mainstream Hindus, but also from Scheduled Tribes groups.

Political Empowerment and Participation

The Sabar women are not aware of the opportunity of equal access to political structures as provided in the Indian Constitution. Lack of awareness is owing to multiple factors from lack of education, adherence to traditional customs and practices and depending on men folk for political activities. In tribal political institutions man exclusively occupies all offices. Another difficulty faced by Sabar women in society is that they are more amenable to influence compared to their male counterparts, hence they easily fall victim to pressure from others. As such the Sabar tribal women have the tendency of depending on male members while their own political activities are comparatively less in society. This reveals that the majority of Sabar tribal women still fail to assert their role and position in politics although the researcher observed critical understanding of the constraints among Sabar women. It is precisely where the potential agency within them for their empowerment lies. Yet it was mainly due to conservative attitude of men to women that political empowerment of women still remains unrealised.

Some facts which indicate low status of tribal women as well as Sabar women:

The study reveals that the tribal girl child is viewed as a potential source of labour to assist the family. So the parents do not allow the girl to go for study. However, from the standpoint of materialistic

development, Sabar women still suffered disproportionately in parameters of education and decent standard of living. However, there are many facts which point to a low status of Sabar women.

1. Their socio- economic and cultural factors can be considered as poverty and poor economic conditions, social customs, cultural ethos, lack of awareness and understanding of the value of formal education, conflict and gap between the home and the school etc.

2. They do not have property rights.

3. Lower educational enrollment and higher drop out in the school.

4. Sabar women are least assertive of their rights and they are excluded from the domain of formal political structure.

In this context the present study is intended to demonstrate interrelated areas of the Sabar community's living in a socio-economic and political setting which primarily operates to produce and reproduce their existing relative powerlessness. Since empowerment cannot be artificially generated by any outside agency but it needs to be claimed by the community itself, hence in this study researcher have tried to put focus on the self-initiative of the people of this community in terms of how far they are willingly participating or not.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have to remember that tribal survival and development depend upon a system of self-development based on their own creative cognitive structures, where the terms of dynamics are defined by the concerned people themselves whereas mainstream development discourse is top-down and driven by elitist ideas. In the absence of any serious debate within central and state level institutions regarding effectiveness of policies with regard to Sabar empowerment it seems most of the government plans fail to meet coveted objectives and ironically it causes separation rather than empowering the tribal group. It is an eye-opener that the basic fault lies in the formulation stage of our development programme which is prepared by the non-experienced persons about tribal life and its distinct features. Therefore, it is necessary for the success of the government plans and programmes that there should be course correction to fill the deficits in empowering tribes, else mere expansion of schemes and implementation of programmes cannot be considered well-devised and well-directed efforts. Also we have to remember

that the tribal society does not need sympathy, but they want proper justice, the right for self-assertion, the benefit of regular income and an innovative dwelling place according to their lifestyle.They want the constitutional process to promote their interests through substantive enjoyment of educational facilities, access to health and capacity building programmes for sustainable livelihood with dignity. However, the discussion in this paper shows that we are far from such equity based and culturally tuned change in society; instead the gap of adjustment between the tribal culture and ethos, and dominant social groups stands as a barrier that partly explains the failure to bring about changes in the conditions of vulnerable tribes and Sabars in particular Indeed there is a big gap between the tribals and the greater Indian society. Till now the tribal lifestyle and culture is unknown to the non-tribals. A dearth of temperamental unity is the reason that they are standing apart in fear and excluded by trust deficit. The separatist powers are playing political games taking this weakness. However, it is important to remember that in spite of the differences of language, region and rituals, together we are always an integral part of the land and we are the descendants of an undivided Indian legacy and history. That is our biggest identity

Reference:

1. Bera, A. (2018). The Lodhas, A Study of Ethno-Medical Practices on Health and Hygiene. New Delhi: Abhijeet Publications
2. Bhowmick, P. K. (2013). Primitive Tribal Groups in Eastern India. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House
3. Census of India, 2001 and 2011: Office of The Registrar General of India, New Delhi
4. Chaudhary, S. N. (2004). Dalit and Tribal Leadership in Panchayats. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company
5. Ghosh, S. K. & Guchhait, S. K. (2017, September). Kharia Sabars bearing the Stigma of Criminality and Social Exclusion: a Study in South- Eastern Purulia, West Bengal, India. IOSR. Retrieved from https: / / www.iosrjournals.org / iosr-hss / papers / Vol.%2022%20Issue9 / Version-10 / F2209107277.pdf
6. Hasan, A. (2014). Tribal Administration in India. Delhi: B R. Publishing Corporation Kishore, R. (2018). Constructive the Criminal Tribe in Colonial India. New Delhi: Innovative Imprint
7. Janjal, P. A. (2021). The Socio-economic Status of Tribal Women in Indian Politics. *IJMER.10*(9), 3-8. DOI: http: / / ijmer.in.doi. / 2021 / 10.09.122

8. Kumari, M. (2018). Empowerment of Tribal People in India: problem and Potential. New Delhi: Innovative Imprint
9. Narayan, D. (Ed). (2002). Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Source Book. Washington, DC: The World Bank
10. Nag, G. S (Ed). (2024). Voices and Vistas, India's Journey in Quest of Dalit and Women Empowerment.Purba Barddhaman, West Bengal. Avenel Press
11. Pal, T. K. (2016). Tribal Economy of West Bengal with Emphasis on Non-Farm Sector. New Delhi: Abhijeet Publication
12. Panda, A. N. (2010). Political Participation of Tribals. Delhi: Abhijeet Publication
13. Paramanik, M. (2022). Traditional cultural practices, customs and religious beliefs of Sabar Tribe of Purulia district of West Bengal. In Mishra, S., Behera, S.K., &Bhui, S. (Ed) (2022). Indigenous knowledge system traditions and transformation (pp.43-52).Mittal Publication
14. Paramanik, M (2022). *Empowerment of an Indigenous Community: A study on Sabar Tribe in Purulia District* (Master's Thesis, Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University). Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University,eScholarship, http: / / hdl.handle.net / 10603 / 41892
15. Pradhan, L. & Debnath, D. (2016). Changing Scenario of. Tribal Women in Context of Forest Management Strategy in Madhya Pradesh. In Bhowmik, P. K et al. (Ed). (2016). Changing Tribal Society in India : Issues and Challenges.New Delhi: Abhijit Publications
16. Sasmal, R. K. (2016). The Kharia, Problem of Education and Development. New Delhi: Abhijeet Publications
17. Singh, V. (2016). Empowerment and Promotion of well-being among Rural Women through Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Micro Credit. Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 7(2). 127-135. http: / / dx.doi.org / 10.5958 / 2321-5828.2016.00021.8

35

Women and Domestic Violence in Indian Society: Possible Ways to Prevent it

Saptadwipa Karmakar

Abstract

Domestic violence is a social disease. Women are variously exploited, deprived and neglected in many aspects of the society. As this exploitation can be seen in the external environment as well as inside the family, women abuse and exploitation of women are always happening. Even today, women's human rights are constantly trampled by patriarchy within the family. This article discusses the different types of violence against women and various ways to prevent domestic violence. The Government of India has enacted various laws to prevent various forms of exploitation against these women. Prevention of Domestic Violence Act 2005 is one of those laws but despite the legislation, this domestic violence cannot be stopped in Indian society.Because to prevent domestic violence, it is not enough to enact laws, it needs to change the education consciousness of every person and uproot some outdated social concepts that have existed for a long time.

Key words: *Domestic Violence, Women abuse, Patriarchy, Human Rights*

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is physical sexual emotional violence. Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior that occurs within a family. In any relationship within a family, one person acts violently to exercise power over another person. Victims of this domestic violence can be men or women, children within the family or even the old age members, but the impact of domestic violence is more intense on girls or women.One in three women worldwide is a victim of violence and it is one of the most widespread human rights violations in the world. (1)

Family is such a loom in Indian society that is not used to seeing women as more than a commodity, her body is the engine of family growth and her labour is the daily driving force of that family. Boys and girls are discriminated in families from childhood. For a daughter it is meant that a big piece of fish is reserved for a son. A female child means she must be a so-called fair beauty in the eyes of the society, otherwise she will not get a husband and if she does not get a husband, she becomes a burden to her father. In such a family system, girls are at the bottom of the priority list. Thus the discrimination between boys and girls created by the family serves as one of the foundations of patriarchy and domestic violence. The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." (2)

Domestic Violence Prevention Act

The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act was made by the Government of India in 2005. However, this Act, also known as the DV Act, was enacted in the country on 26 October 2006, although it was enacted in 2005.The main objective of this Act is to remedy the physical or mental abuse of women within the family.The Act has clarified the definition of domestic violence, where apart from physical and mental torture, verbal, financial, sexual torture has also been mentioned. It is a criminal law.Forcing a woman into marriage against her will or not allowing her to marry a man of her choice, to pressure a woman to give birth to a son, asking money from father's house, is domestic violence. (3)

The Act ensures woman's right to reside in her matrimonial home. This Act has a special feature with specific provisions under law which provides protection to a woman to „live in violence free home. Though this Act has civil and criminal provisions, a woman victim can get immediate civil remedies within 60 days. Aggrieved women can file cases under this Act against any male adult perpetrator who is in domestic relationship with her. They can also include other relatives of the husband and male partner as respondents to seek remedies in their case. (4)

Different forms of violence against women

Even though various laws have been made in the society against the oppression of women, women are still oppressed in various ways. From before birth to death, women are exploited and tortured in various ways inside and outside the family, such as-

Feticide: Female feticide is a gender-selective abortion where a female fetus is illegally terminated solely based on the reason that the fetus is a girl. Through recent technology developments in the past 20 years, we are now able to detect the gender of the fetus much earlier in the pregnancy. Because of this, there is a rapidly increasing number of gender-selective abortions performed in India. (5)

In Indian society, girls are subjected to torture even before birth. Feticide is an expression of such torture. According to the 2011 census, there were 914 female children for every 1,000 male children between the ages of zero to six. (6)

Social bias in favor of a malechild lead to abortions (out of 8000 cases of abortions Following sex-determination tests, 7999 are female fetus, According to a Survey) Sex-ratio is continuously declining all Over India except for Kerala. Inefficient and ineffectiveperformance of political, administrative and economicstructures and mechanisms failed to stop it. (7)

Source:- Sample Registration System, Registrar General of India. (8)

Infanticide: Over 1000's of girl child deaths in Indian communities are due to opium overdose. A girl child is still considered undesirable in most families. So 90% of abandoned children thrown in dustbins or rivers are girls. (9)

In 1990, the Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen alerted to a phenomenon mainly affecting girls: the selection of births; leading to a significant demographic imbalance. By that time, there were already 100 million women missing in Asia. (10)

A girl child Is still considered undesirable in various families because the birth of a girl child brings with it some unwanted thoughts such as additional expenses for marriage dowry etc. So they expect a son instead of a girl child.

Physical assaults, Rape, Gang rape, Molestation: According to a Report, there are reported cases of one rape Every 54 minutes, a molestation every 26 minutes; and an act of cruelty every 33 minutes.

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistic says – every 20 minutes, a woman is raped somewhere in India, not to mention the countless number of Cases of molestations or rapes going unreported. (11) India's National Crime Records Bureau documented 31,677 cases of rape nationwide in 2021 – a figure that is the tip of an iceberg in a country where only a minutiae of sexual assaults are reported. (12)

Dowry System: Dowry system is one of the social ills. A man's family determines the value of a woman in marriage. The price that is fixed is to be paid by the woman's family. If unable to pay, various kinds of physical and mental torture are done to the women. This dowry system is more prevalent in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan. While some cases are reported, many cases go unreported. Today the government has come up with many laws (The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961) and reforms, not only to eradicate the dowry system, but also to uplift the status of the girl child by bringing in many schemes. However, owing to the social nature of this problem, the legislation has failed to produce the desired results in our society. (13) In 2022, reported dowry death cases in India amounted to nearly 6.4 thousand. (14)

Nature of domestic violence

- **Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse involves hurting or trying to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, burning, grabbing, pinching, shoving, slapping, hair-pulling, biting, denying medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use, or using other physical force.
- **Sexual Abuse:**It involves Sexual criticism, sexual intercourse against women's reluctance, various physical abuses during intercourse, rape by other male members of the family etc.
- **Psychological Abuse:** Examples of various types of mental torture are mental pressure for giving birth to a son, various types of torture for giving birth to a girl child, various types of mental pressure for non-payment of dowry, mental pressure through various verbal abuse, various kinds of insulting comments about parental home etc.
- **Economical Abuse:** For example, malnutrition due to not providing the necessary food, basic needs of women are not met, not allowed to work, the health of women in the family is not given importance etc.

Causes of domestic violence:

We can categorize the causes of domestic violence in various ways such as cultural political economic.

Cultural**:**

In a patriarchal society like India, male children are preferred over female children inside and outside the family, one of the reasons being cultural. The son is considered to be the bearer of the family or lineage. Boys and girls are discriminated from birth. Within the family, women are taught to be subservient to men. A man's greatness is established through various religious ceremonies. In Lakshmi's Panchali, it is said that the root cause of various problems in the world is that girls are discarding their shyness for a little happiness, women are traveling here and there according to their will without listening to their husbands. In this way girls are tried to be trapped within a family discipline and bond. Also, male superiority is established through dowry system, various marital rules, right to family property passed down through ages, male child's right to funeral of parents etc.

Economic:

As a result of the low education rate of women, the tendency to work is also very low. As a result, female children or housewives have to be financially dependent on the male member. Women are given very less amount of money. Women have to be dependent on the male member. Moreover, housewives are not paid any price for their housework in the family. How the price of housework will be determined has not been fixed till date.

Political:

Even after all these years of independence in India, women still have limited participation in decision-making in the political arena, in the media. All over India the social view of women is still either mother or sister of the house or they are housewives. Most people in the society are not used to seeing women in political leadership positions. A major barrier to women's political empowerment lies in the process of socialization of girls in a patriarchal system. As political parties in India are predominantly run by men, women have almost no role in panchayat functioning, decision-making at the party level.

Possible Ways to prevent domestic violence:

- The literacy rate of women should be increased.
- Real empowerment of women must happen and women must be economically independent.
- Women should come forward at the decision-making level in the political sphere.
- Any type of violence against women should not be hidden and every incident should be reviewed seriously.
- Family members should undergo psychological counseling to resolve domestic problems, disputes.
- Children should be taught from childhood that boys and girls are equal and respect each other.
- Any crime of domestic violence should be punished in public to raise public awareness.
- Girls should be taught to protest against any form of violence.
- No girl or boy should be married against her will.
- The administration must become more responsible in preventing domestic violence.
- Providing sex education.
- They must always be prepared for self- defense by getting training in Karate etc.

Conclusion:

Government of India enacted various laws against violence against women for the protection of women, but even today women are exploited, oppressed, deprived and neglected in different ways inside and outside the family. By now we can understand why sensitive issues like domestic violence should be discussed seriously. Only if we can change people's consciousness, we can stop violence and society will become a better place to live. Not only should laws be made, but the structural changes of the society should be made, the educational spirit of every person should be developed and the outdated social concepts should be uprooted.

References:

1. https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-women#tab=tab_1. *https://www.who.int/.* [Online] World Health Organization, May 2016. [Cited: 13 January 2025.]

2. https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-women#tab=tab_2. *https://www.who.int/.* [Online] World Health Organization, May 2016. [Cited: 13 January 2025.]
3. Ghosh, Madhupurna. *sutanotir sokhyo.* 2005.
4. https://www.tnsocialwelfare.tn.gov.in/en/social-legislations/protection-of-womens-from-domestic-violence-act. *https://www.tnsocialwelfare.tn.gov.in/en.* [Online] Social Welfare & Women Empowerment Department, 2005.
5. Kyles, Olivia. https://www.dressember.org/blog/what-is-female-foeticide. *https://www.dressember.org/.* [Online] Dressember, 2018.
6. *Stopping female feticide in India: the failure and unintended consequence of ultrasound restriction.* Tabaie, Sheida. New York : Journal og Global Health, 2017. doi: 10.7189/jogh.07.010304.
7. *Domestic Violence Against Women In India: A Family.* Sharon, Dr.S.Prescila. 12, Pune : Indian Journal of Applied Research, 2014, Vol. 4. ISSN No-2249-555X.
8. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SINGH, DR. BHOLA SINGH, SHRI AJAY MISRA TENI, DR. K. GOPAL. FEMALE FOETICIDES. 2016.
9. *Domestic Violence Against Women In India: A Family.* Sharon, Dr.S.Prescila. 12, pune : Indian journal of Applied Research, 2014, Vol. 4. ISSN No-2249-555X.
10. Terpant, Jérémy. To be born a woman in India. Foeticide and infanticide: origins, consequences and solutions. 2021.
11. NCRB. *1 rape reported every 15 minutes in India.* Delhi : The times of India, 2018.
12. *India lodged average 86 rapes daily, 49 offences against women per hour in 2021: NCRB data.* New Delhi : The Hindu, 2022.
13. *Dowry System in India.* s.l. : Drishti, 2021.
14. *Total number of reported dowry death cases in India from 2005 to 2022.* s.l. : Statista Research Department, 2024.

36

Women Empowerment through Women Leadership

Dr. Reena Nand

Abstract

Leadership is a powerful tool for women's empowerment, enabling them to influence policies, inspire communities, and create opportunities for others. Women leaders act as role models, break gender stereotypes, and advocate for equality and inclusivity. Here's an in-depth look at how leadership drives women's empowerment with some memories of Vedic periods. The condition of women was quite good during early Vedic period. They enjoyed parity with men in society. But, gradually with changing time, women lost their due importance and society became more and more patriarchal except for certain tribal cultures. The role of women as backbone of every family, in particular, and that of society, in general, cannot be underestimated. It is no secret that women have faced more barriers than men when it comes to fully participating in the economy. Disparity between men and women persists in the form of pay gaps, opportunities for advancement and minimal representation in decision making. Gender diversity is on higher priority in corporate world. And why not, women bring different perspective and approaches to business, resulting in more inclusive work place and very often better performance for the organisation. Women leaders often bring a collaborative and inclusive leadership style. They prioritise teamwork, communication, and relationship. Women value work-life balance. Many women leaders balance kids and families with their professional lives. One of the main advantages of female leadership is the ability to empathize and show emotional intelligence. This article attempts to evaluate the role of women in leadership position and the author believes that women empowerment would be more effective and far reaching if women are in leadership role with some special notes from Jharkhand state. They would not

only serve as a role model but help develop their fellow women to achieve more in life.

Keywords: *Women, Leadership, Communication, Empowerment, Society, Disparity, Grassroot, Leadership*

Introduction: Leadership is a powerful tool for women's empowerment, enabling them to influence policies, inspire communities, and create opportunities for others. Women leaders act as role models, break gender stereotypes, and advocate for equality and inclusivity. Here's an in-depth look at how leadership drives women's empowerment with some memories of Vedic periods. The condition of women was quite good during early Vedic period. They enjoyed parity with men in society. But, gradually with changing time, women lost their due importance and society became more and more patriarchal except for certain tribal cultures. The role of women as backbone of every family, in particular, and that of society, in general, cannot be underestimated.

It is no secret that women have faced more barriers than men when it comes to fully participating in the economy. Disparity between men and women persists in the form of pay gaps, opportunities for advancement and minimal representation in decision making. Gender diversity is on higher priority in corporate world. And why not, women bring different perspective and approaches to business, resulting in more inclusive work place and very often better performance for the organisation. Women leaders often bring a collaborative and inclusive leadership style. They prioritise teamwork, communication, and relationship. Women value work-life balance. Many women leaders balance kids and families with their professional lives. One of the main advantages of female leadership is the ability to empathize and show emotional intelligence.

This article attempts to evaluate the role of women in leadership position and the author believes that women empowerment would be more effective and far reaching if women are in leadership role with some special notes from Jharkhand state. They would not only serve as a role model but help develop their fellow women to achieve more in life.

Retrospective sketch of women leadership:

The Early Vedic era (c. 1500–1000 BCE) was a period marked by relatively high social status and respect for women in ancient Indian

society. Women held significant roles in familial, religious, and intellectual domains. Here's an overview of the status and contributions of women during this period:

1. Social Status

Equality with Men: Women were regarded as equals to men in many aspects of life, including education, religion, and decision-making.

Marriage and Family: Women had the freedom to choose their partners through practices like swayamvara (self-choice). Monogamy was the norm, and mutual respect between spouses was emphasized.

Property Rights: Though property inheritance was limited, women could own and manage personal property (stridhan).

2. Education and Intellectual Pursuits

Access to Education: Women had access to education and were often well-versed in the Vedas and other scriptures.

Women Scholars: Female sages (rishikas) like Gargi and Maitreyi were renowned for their intellectual debates and philosophical contributions in texts like the Upanishads.

Contributions to Literature: Women composed hymns in the Rigveda, such as those by Lopamudra, Ghosha, and Apala.

3. Religious Role

Participation in Rituals: Women actively participated in Vedic rituals alongside men, reflecting their spiritual significance.

Spiritual Independence: They could perform yajnas (sacrifices) and other rituals independently, especially as unmarried or widowed individuals.

Deification of Women: Goddesses like Saraswati (knowledge), Lakshmi (wealth), and Durga (power) symbolized the reverence for feminine divinity.

4. Economic Contributions

Agriculture and Household Economy: Women contributed to agriculture, dairy farming, and household management, playing crucial roles in the rural economy.

Craftsmanship: They were skilled in weaving, pottery, and other crafts, contributing to the economic stability of families.

5. Cultural and Artistic Influence

Music and Dance: Women were integral to cultural activities, excelling in music, dance, and other performing arts.

Traditional Knowledge: They preserved and transmitted traditional knowledge, including medicinal practices and folklore.

6. Decline in Status (Later Vedic Era)

In the Later Vedic period (c. 1000–500 BCE), the status of women began to decline due to the rise of patriarchal norms and rigid societal structures. Practices like child marriage and restrictions on women's education became prevalent. Women in the Early Vedic era enjoyed considerable respect, autonomy, and opportunities for intellectual and spiritual growth. They were not only integral to familial and societal structures but also contributed significantly to philosophical and religious discourses. The values of gender equality and respect for women's contributions seen in the Early Vedic era can serve as inspiration for contemporary efforts toward women empowerment and social reform.

Empowerment Through Leadership

1. Political Leadership

Representation in Governance: Women in political leadership positions influence policies on healthcare, education, and gender equality. Reservation policies, such as in Panchayati Raj Institutions, have empowered women to lead grassroots governance. Advocacy for Gender-Specific Policies, Female leaders are more likely to champion issues like women's safety, maternal health, and access to education, benefiting large sections of society. As as examples we may note the names of honorable leaders like Droupadi Murmu, Jacinda Ardern, and Angela Merkel show how women in politics can shape national and global narratives.In Corporate Leadership Women CEOs and executives challenge traditional norms and set examples of how women can excel in corporate environments. In terms of Economic Empowerment Women-led businesses often prioritize inclusivity, create opportunities for other women, and address social issues.Leaders like Indra Nooyi and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw inspire women to aim for leadership roles in business and entrepreneurship.

2. Grassroots Leadership

Community Impact: Women leaders in rural areas address local challenges like poverty, education, and health, directly impacting the lives of other women.Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Women-led SHGs foster leadership, improve financial independence, and provide a platform for decision-making. In states like Jharkhand, women sarpanches and SHG leaders are driving change at the village level.

3. Social and Cultural Leadership

Advocacy for Social Issues: Women leaders champion causes like gender equality, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. By the leadership capability womens are Influenced on Norms also, they challenge societal norms and inspire younger generations to follow suit. Activists like Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg demonstrate how young women can lead global movements. Female leaders influence laws and programs that uplift marginalized groups, especially women. In terms of Community Development, Women leaders especially in rural areas, drive inclusive growth, benefiting entire communities.

4. Educational Leadership

Role Models: Women leaders in education inspire girls to pursue learning and dream bigger. In case of Policy Influence, women in education policy advocate for inclusive curriculums and equitable access to resources. Female educators and academicians around the world contribute to shaping progressive societies.

Women Empowerment: An example from The Jharkhand State

Jharkhand has made strides in empowering women, particularly in rural and tribal communities. Efforts focus on improving access to education, economic opportunities, healthcare, and social equality, despite challenges like poverty, patriarchal norms, and violence against women. Women empowerment in Jharkhand is gaining momentum, with collective efforts from the government, NGOs, and communities helping women break barriers and achieve greater autonomy. Some important notes from Jharkhand sate are mentioned here;

1. Education and Literacy:

Improved Literacy Rates: Jharkhand's female literacy rate, though below the national average, has steadily improved due to government and NGO initiatives. Programs like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan aim to ensure access to quality education for girls.

Residential Schools: Schools like Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV) provide education for underprivileged girls, including those from tribal areas.

Skill Development: Government initiatives like Skill India and vocational training programs target young women, enabling them to earn livelihoods.

2. Economic Empowerment

Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Women-led SHGs under the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) have been instrumental in promoting financial independence. These groups engage in activities like handicrafts, agriculture, and micro-enterprises.

Entrepreneurship: Initiatives like Tejaswini Project, supported by the World Bank, focus on building entrepreneurial skills among young women.

Employment in Rural Development: Programs like MGNREGA prioritize the inclusion of women in rural employment schemes, ensuring financial stability.

3. Health and Nutrition

Maternal Health: Schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and Ayushman Bharat have improved maternal and child healthcare in remote areas.

Malnutrition Programs: Efforts like Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) address malnutrition among women and children, particularly in tribal belts.

Reproductive Health Awareness: Government and NGOs work to increase awareness about reproductive rights and menstrual hygiene.

4. Political Participation

Panchayati Raj Institutions: Reservation of seats for women in local governance has enabled them to become sarpanches, panchayat members, and other grassroots leaders.

Advocacy and Representation: Women leaders like tribal activist Dayamani Barla and President Droupadi Murmu serve as inspirations for women aspiring to lead.

5. Social Empowerment

Addressing Violence Against Women: Initiatives like Nari Shakti Kendras and Sakhi One-Stop Centres provide support for victims of domestic violence and trafficking.

Awareness Campaigns: Campaigns focus on promoting gender equality and addressing harmful practices like child marriage.

Cultural Inclusion: Tribal women are increasingly recognized for preserving and promoting indigenous culture and traditions.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Jharkhand

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Jharkhand have become a cornerstone of rural development, women empowerment, and poverty alleviation. SHGs are small groups of women from similar socio-economic backgrounds who come together to save money, access credit, and pursue collective economic activities. SHGs in Jharkhand have proven to be powerful instruments for socio-economic transformation, particularly for women. With sustained support, they can continue to drive inclusive development and reduce poverty in the state.

1. Role of SHGs in Jharkhand

Economic Empowerment: SHGs provide women access to microfinance and help them start small businesses, improving their financial independence.

Skill Development: Training programs enable members to develop skills in tailoring, handicrafts, agriculture, and animal husbandry.

Social Empowerment: SHGs foster community participation, reduce social isolation, and enhance decision-making abilities.

Poverty Alleviation: By providing credit and opportunities for income generation, SHGs contribute to reducing poverty.

2. Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS)

JSLPS is the nodal agency under the Department of Rural Development in Jharkhand, promoting SHGs through the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM).They have taken few Key Initiatives; Formation and nurturing of SHGs, Financial inclusion by linking SHGs with banks for credit access.Market linkages for SHG products. Capacity building through training programs etc.

3. Major Activities of SHGs in Jharkhand

Agriculture and Allied Activities: Members are involved in organic farming, dairy farming, and poultry.

Handicrafts and Artisan Work: Tribal women create traditional products like sohrai art, bamboo crafts, and lac bangles.

Retail and Micro-Enterprises: Many SHGs run grocery stores, tailoring units, and food-processing businesses.

Health and Nutrition: SHGs work on community health programs and awareness campaigns on nutrition and sanitation.

4. Key Programs Supporting SHGs

Tejaswini Project: Supported by the World Bank, this project enhances socio-economic opportunities for adolescent girls and young women by linking them to SHGs.

National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM): Focuses on universal social mobilization through SHGs and improving their economic sustainability.

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP): Empowers women farmers by integrating them into SHG networks and providing them with agricultural training.

5. Impact of SHGs in Jharkhand

Women Empowerment: SHGs have given women a platform to voice their opinions and contribute to household income. Women are a mandatory side for the enhancement of economic development since the financial activism. Many women have become entrepreneurs, significantly contributing to the rural economy. SHGs address issues like child marriage, domestic violence, and gender discrimination through collective action. SHGs foster a sense of solidarity and mutual support among women which leads them to promote community building ideas and ensuring social changes.

6. Challenges Faced by SHGs in Jharkhand

Lack of Financial Literacy: Limited knowledge of managing funds and accessing formal banking services.

Market Access: Difficulty in finding markets for SHG products at fair prices.

Limited Training: Inadequate training in advanced skills and business management.

Social Barriers: Patriarchal norms and limited mobility for women in rural areas.

7. Success Stories of SHGs in Jharkhand

Organic Farming: SHGs in districts like Dumka and Latehar have adopted organic farming practices and marketed their products locally and nationally.

Artisanal Products: Tribal women SHGs have revived traditional art forms like sohrai and pyatkar painting, generating income through exhibitions and e-commerce platforms.

Poultry Cooperatives: Groups like "Jharkhand Women Poultry Federation" have turned poultry farming into a profitable venture, employing thousands of women.

8. Way Forward for SHGs in Jharkhand

Capacity Building: Provide advanced training in entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and product marketing.

Market Integration: Develop e-commerce platforms and partnerships to enhance the market reach of SHG products.

Policy Support: Strengthen financial support and ensure timely credit access.

Awareness Programs: Educate SHG members about their rights, financial schemes, and opportunities for expansion.

Challenges to Women Empowerment in Jharkhand

Patriarchal Norms: Deep-rooted societal norms often restrict women's roles in decision-making.

Economic Inequality: Many women still face barriers to owning property or accessing formal employment.

High Violence Rates: Issues like trafficking, domestic violence, and lack of safety in public spaces remain persistent.

Educational Barriers: Early dropouts, child marriage, and limited higher education opportunities hinder progress.

Social Barriers: Patriarchal norms and limited access to education and resources often hinder women's participation in leadership roles. Economic Dependence: Poverty and lack of economic independence

remain significant barriers. Safety Concerns: High rates of violence against women in Jharkhand, including trafficking and domestic abuse, pose additional challenges to women stepping into leadership roles.

Women leadership:

Women leadership in Jharkhand, as in many parts of India, has seen gradual growth over the years. Despite challenges rooted in social, economic, and cultural factors, women in Jharkhand have emerged as influential leaders across various sectors, including politics, grassroots activism, education, and social work.

1. Political Representation

Women in Governance: Jharkhand has witnessed women holding significant positions in governance. Leaders like Droupadi Murmu, who served as the Governor of Jharkhand and is now the President of India, represent a significant milestone for tribal and women leadership.

Reservation Policies: Jharkhand adheres to the reservation policies for women in local governance, which has enabled many women to take leadership roles in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). Women sarpanches and council members have been instrumental in driving community-focused development. Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Women-led SHGs in Jharkhand, supported by initiatives like the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS), have empowered women to lead economic and social transformation in rural areas. These groups work on financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, and social awareness.

Activism: Women activists and leaders have been at the forefront of movements addressing issues like land rights, forest conservation, and women's safety. For example, tribal women leaders have played crucial roles in preserving their communities' cultural and environmental heritage.

2. Initiatives to Promote Women Leadership

Skill Development Programs: Government and non-government organizations run various programs to equip women with skills for leadership and entrepreneurship. Educational Opportunities: Efforts to improve literacy and higher education access for girls are fostering future leaders. NGO Support: Organizations like PRADAN and CARE India work to build leadership capacity among rural women.

3. Emerging Women Leaders

Women from tribal communities, often marginalized in the mainstream, are now emerging as political, educational, and social leaders. These include educators, activists, and entrepreneurs who are breaking stereotypes and paving the way for a more inclusive future. Increased focus on education, awareness, and policy support is essential to nurture women leaders. Encouraging more women to participate in politics and governance at higher levels can amplify their impact on policy-making. Promoting role models from Jharkhand who have excelled in leadership can inspire younger generations. Jharkhand's progress in women's leadership remains a work in progress, but the determination of its women, coupled with supportive policies, continues to drive meaningful change. For our grassroots leaders, women sarpanches in India's villages demonstrate how local governance can be transformed through female leadership. Droupadi Murmu: From Jharkhand's Governor to India's President, her journey symbolizes the potential of empowered tribal women.

Dayamani Barla: A prominent activist and journalist, she has championed land and tribal rights in the state.Rural Entrepreneurs: Women entrepreneurs in SHGs and cooperatives are transforming rural economies with innovative businesses.

Focus on Education: Ensure equitable access to quality education, especially in tribal areas.

Empathy and Inclusivity: Women leaders often bring a collaborative approach, emphasizing empathy and inclusivity.

Transformational Leadership: They inspire and motivate others to exceed expectations and work toward shared goals.

Adaptability: Women leaders have shown resilience and adaptability, excelling in challenging environments.

Challenges and Ways to Foster Leadership for Women Empowerment:

Gender Bias: Women leaders often face stereotypes and discrimination in male-dominated fields.

Limited Opportunities: Structural inequalities restrict access to leadership positions.

Work-Life Balance: Societal expectations of women as caregivers can limit their career growth.

Mentorship and Training: Programs that nurture leadership skills in women from a young age.

Policy Support: Encouraging women's participation in leadership through quotas and inclusive workplace policies.

Community Support: Creating environments where families and communities support women's ambitions.

Education and Awareness: Empowering girls through education and building their confidence to take leadership roles.

Conclusion

Women empowerment through leadership is transformative not just for women but for society as a whole. Empowering women to lead ensures diversity, innovation, and equitable development. With continued support and dismantling of barriers, women leaders can drive systemic change and inspire future generations. For our future, we should Strengthen our Policies; Enhance the implementation of existing schemes for women's health, safety, and economic inclusion. Promote Leadership; Support women in taking up leadership roles in politics, businesses, and communities and Community Involvement; Engage men and boys in gender equality initiatives to address patriarchal attitudes.

References

1. Basu, P., & Srivastava, P. (2005). Scaling-Up microfinance for India's rural poor. In *World Bank policy research working paper*. https: / / doi.org / 10.1596 / 1813-9450-3646
2. Bhowmick, P. K. (2005a). Empowerment of rural women / : a study across the three states Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal. In *R.N. Bhattacharya eBooks*. http: / / ci.nii.ac.jp / ncid / BA80381350
3. Bhowmick, P. K. (2005b). Empowerment of rural women / : a study across the three states Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal. In *R.N. Bhattacharya eBooks*. http: / / ci.nii.ac.jp / ncid / BA80381350
4. Chakravarty, S., & Jha, A. N. (2011). Women Empowerment through SHGs-A Case Study of Jharkhand State in India. *Journal of Social and Psychological Sciences*, *4*(1), 3. https: / / www.questia.com / library / journal / 1G1-314443201 / women-empowerment-through-shgs-a-case-study-of-jharkhand
5. Engida, Y. M. (2021). The three dimensional role of education for women empowerment. *Journal of Social Sciences*, *17*(1), 32–38. https: / / doi.org / 10.3844 / jssp.2021.32.38

6. Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, *8*(4), 777–795. https: / / doi.org / 10.1086 / 448181

7. Goetz, A. M. (1997). *Getting institutions right for women in development*. https: / / www.amazon.com / Getting-Institutions-Right-Women-Development / dp / 1856495264

8. Lakshmi, V. (2011). Women empowerment in India. In *VDM Verlag Dr. Müller eBooks*. https: / / www.knigozal.com / store / gb / book / women-empowerment-in-india / isbn / 978-3-639-37764-4

9. Narang, U. (2012). Self help group: an effective approach to women empowerment in India. *International Journal of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Research*, *1*(8), 8–16. https: / / www.cabdirect.org / cabdirect / abstract / 20123409414

10. Panda, D. K. (2009). Socio-Economic Impacts of Self-Help Groups on Rural Women: Findings from Orissa and Jharkhand States of India. *ASBM Journal of Management*, *2*(2), 88. https: / / www.questia.com / library / journal / 1P3-2061379131 / socio-economic-impacts-of-self-help-groups-on-rural

11. Singh, C., Ojha, D. K., Rath, R. C., & Sukthankar, S. (2020). An analysis of women entrepreneur empowerment on SMEs and its economic sustainability in India: special reference to Ranchi City in Jharkhand. *Splint International Journal of Professionals*, *7*(4), 84–93. https: / / www.indianjournals.com / ijor.aspx?target=ijor:sijp&volume=7&issue=4& article=002

12. Srivastava, A., & Dubey, L. (2017). Women empowerment in India: A critical analysis. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, *7*(10), 87–104. https: / / www.indianjournals.com / ijor.aspx? target=ijor:ijrss &volume=7&issue=10&article=009

13. Tarique, M. (2011). *Education and women empowerment in India*. https: / / www.amazon.com / Education-Women-Empowerment-Mohammad-Tarique / dp / 3656089450

14. Tiwari, A. (2016). Relationship between Poverty, Women Empowerment and SHGs: A Study of Indian States. *International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research*, *4*(3). https: / / doi.org / 10.20431 / 2349-0349.0403001

37

Women in India: Rudali-The Extinct Community in the Colonial Era

Ankit Raj Saha

Abstract

"Jis tan ko chua tune, us tan ko chupaun

Jis man ko lage naina, wo kisko dikhaun"

Bhupen Hazarika and Gulzar

Set in the arid terrains of Rajasthan's Shekhawati region, Rudali, directed by Kalpana Lajmi, offers a nuanced reinterpretation of Mahashweta Devi's narrative, delving into the intricate intersections of caste, gender and grief within pre-colonial-Indian context. The film rigorously examines the lived experiences of professional mourners, thereby illuminating the profound socioeconomic and emotional ramifications of entrenched caste hierarchies. The feudal system is intricately interwoven into the socio-economic fabric, within the film illustrates the oppressive mechanism that shapes not only material conditions but also the emotional landscapes of marginalized women exemplified by the character Shanichari. This framework accommodates commodified grief, remolding sorrow into labour form that perpetuates prevailing hierarchies. Lajmi's depiction reveals the inherent exploitation within these dynamics highlighting the dehumanizing consequences of a system that favours landlords while confining lower caste individuals specifically women, to servile positions. This intersection of caste and feudalism offers a poignant critique of residual inequities, compelling audiences to engage with the entrenched dynamics perpetuating social injustice in the film. Through its poignant story-telling, Rudali foregrounds the marginalization of these women effectively critiquing the socio-political structures that sustained their disenfranchisements which directly mirrors the struggles faced by its characters throughout the film, but also interrogates the broader societal norms that underpin oppression in rural pre-colonial India. There lie the scars that India

carries and often get reflected by such movies, which are not just legends but a mirror of ourselves.

"Bujh gayi raah se chaon,
Dur hai, dur hai, pi-ka gaon,
Dhire chalo dhire chalo"
- Bhupen Hazarika and Gulzar

Keywords: *Caste, Women, Grief, Rudali, Marginalization*

Introduction

Kalpana Lajmi's Rudali (1993), adapted from Mahasweta Devi's poignant short story, dives deep into the experiences of marginalized women in Rajasthan, particularly focusing on lower-caste widows who become professional mourners known as Rudalis. Set against the harsh and unforgiving landscape of Rajasthan's Shekhawati region, the film critiques the caste and feudal systems that exploit these women, revealing a disturbing tradition where their sorrow is both depended upon and dehumanized. The story follows Shanichari, portrayed compellingly by Dimple Kapadia, who, after the death of her husband, transforms her deep personal grief into a role where she mourns for the elite. Her experience of poverty and social exclusion leads her to accept this role, highlighting a painful irony: while her grief serves a significant function at the funerals of wealthy individuals, it simultaneously reflects the exploitative nature of the very society that utilizes her emotional labour. This mirrors realities expressed in historical accounts like those found in *The History of Dalit Women* by Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, which document the systemic marginalization of women within caste hierarchies (Tharu & Lalita, 1991). As Rudali unfolds, it interrogates the commodification of grief, transforming an intimate personal experience into a public performance. This notion echoes in works like Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), where personal trauma and societal expectations intersect, showcasing how individual emotions are shaped and sometimes exploited by broader societal forces. The mourning rituals of the Rudalis maintain social order yet come laden with moral judgments of their emotional authenticity, illustrating the contradictory nature of their existence.

Lajmi's film provokes us to think about how societal systems shape emotional expression, particularly grief. Through Shanichari, the audience witnesses firsthand how caste and gender expectations

distort self-perception and emotional expression. In one of the film's most haunting scenes, Shanichari is called to express sorrow at a wealthy man's funeral, even while grappling with her losses. This moment starkly critiques a societal structure that manipulates individual grief for the good of the privileged. In another pivotal scene, Shanichari confronts societal disdain, highlighting the painful dichotomy of being essential yet disposable within social rituals. Scholars such as Anupama Rao in *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India* (2009) discuss how similarly marginalized groups navigate between societal utility and dehumanization, reinforcing the timeless struggle against entrenched hierarchies and discrimination. Shanichari's journey reflects the psychological toll of endless caste-based exploitation, echoing themes from contemporary discussions on emotional labour in literature and film. The evolution of her character—from a passive victim to a woman reclaiming agency—serves as a testament to resilience amidst oppression, resonating with narratives like those in *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen (1879), where a woman's awakening leads her to challenge her societal role. By highlighting

Shanichari's struggles, the film reminds us that the caste and gender discrimination faced by Rudalis is not just a relic of the past; it persists in various forms today. This message resonates in current advocacy for social justice, reflecting ongoing inequalities that echo throughout Indian society. As we grapple with these issues, Rudali is a timeless reminder of the fight against marginalization and the quest for dignity and recognition.

With this foundation, the research poses a crucial question: 'How does prolonged exposure to caste-based exploitation and the commercialization of grief impact the psychological side of marginalized women in both traditional and contemporary contexts?' This inquiry situates Rudali within broader discussions surrounding psychological endurance and social identity, examining how these women navigate and respond to societal judgment across different eras. Linking historical practices to modern-day biases faced by women in marginalized positions, this study aspires to uncover the ongoing influence of systemic marginalization on self-image and coping strategies. The framework lays the understanding of the enduring legacy of these practices in shaping contemporary social attitudes.

The study uses a qualitative research methodology that combines textual analysis and historical context. It focuses on the psychological

and socio-economic aspects depicted in Rudali. The primary sources are Lajmi's film "Rudali" and Devi's narrative, which we analyze for their portrayals of caste, gender, and emotional labour. We closely read these texts to reveal how the pain of marginalized women is commodified. Particularly through the character of Shanichari, we understand the psychological impact of ongoing marginalization. We also incorporate secondary sources, including scholarly works on caste and gender in South Asia, historical analyses of Rudali practices, and psychological studies on stigma and marginalization. These sources help contextualize the Rudali tradition within a broader historical framework and show how social hierarchies influenced women's identities in pre-colonial India. Furthermore, we connect historical practices to modern issues by drawing parallels with contemporary studies of marginalized occupations, highlighting the continued psychological effects of social judgment on lower-caste and economically disadvantaged women. This study aims to clarify how the legacy of the Rudali tradition still affects perceptions and challenges faced by women in marginalized workplaces.

"Performing Grief: Intersectionality, Emotional Labour, and the Politics of Marginalization in *Rudali*"

Kalpana Lajmi examines the interplay between personal grief and societal expectations through the character of Shanichari. The film highlights how individual sorrow is transformed into a commodified act, showcasing a troubling reality where grief is exploited for economic and cultural gain. This commodification alienates Shanichari from her genuine feelings and reinforces oppressive structures of caste and gender. Scholars have linked the concept of emotional labour, articulated by Hochschild (1983), to the systemic oppression of marginalized groups. Hochschild explores how emotions are strategically performed for economic or cultural purposes. This theme resonates in Rudali, where professional mourners, the Rudalis, confront societal demands for emotional expression while remaining invisible and undervalued. Lajmi critiques this commodification, revealing how it sustains rigid social hierarchies. The elite benefit from the mourning rituals performed by women like Shanichari, yet these women remain marginalized and trapped in exploitation. Rao (2009), *The Caste Question*, further underscores how individuals in stigmatized roles are stripped of their humanity and agency, exemplifying broader socio-political dynamics. Rudali, sheds light on

these pressing issues, urging reflection on the commodification of grief in a society that marginalizes those who suffer.

Shanichari's struggles provide a significant illustration of the intersectionality of caste and gender, wherein her identity as a lower-caste widow exacerbates her social and economic vulnerabilities. The framework on intersectionality established by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) offers critical contextualization for understanding the compounded oppression that Shanichari experiences. Her role as a Rudali represents a systemic continuation of both caste-based discrimination and gender-based marginalization, which are rooted in historical traditions that persist in contemporary society Tharu & Lalita (1991). The Rudali tradition, based on entrenched caste hierarchies, compels women into cycles of exploitation, effectively denying them agency while simultaneously rendering them essential to societal rituals. Shanichari's internal conflicts, shaped by her societal roles, reflect the broader dynamics of intersectional oppression encountered by women in India and across the globe Rao (2009). The psychological toll of Shanichari's role is manifest in her emotional detachment and identity struggles. Her grief, rather than being a private experience, transforms into a public performance dictated by societal expectations. As Hochschild (1983) articulates, emotional labour often results in "emotional dissonance," where individuals experience significant internal conflict stemming from the suppression of their authentic emotions.

Shanichari's internalization of societal judgment, along with her adaptive survival strategies, underscores the psychological costs associated with prolonged marginalization. Research conducted by Devine and Lawrence (2006) on the effects of social stigma reinforces this perspective, indicating that systemic exploitation adversely affects self-esteem and contributes to mental health challenges among marginalized populations.

This tradition serves as a historical lens through which we can examine the ongoing issues of caste-based and gendered exploitation in today's job market. Women in marginalized professions, such as domestic workers and manual scavengers, often experience similar dynamics of societal dependence and social stigma. These roles are reflective of deep-rooted societal norms that continue to devalue certain groups based on caste and gender.

Women Writing in India Tharu, Lalita (1991) illustrates how traditional caste practices have evolved into modern forms of occupational marginalization. They explore how historical injustices transform but remain relevant, highlighting a continuity of exploitation that transcends time. The narrative of Shanichari exemplifies this phenomenon, showcasing how systemic inequities are preserved through adaptation. This connection between past and present underscores the need to critically examine social structures that continue to hinder equality and justice for marginalized women. Understanding these historical contexts is essential for addressing modern-day disparities.

Discussion

The film serves as a critical examination of the dehumanizing practices entrenched in caste and gender hierarchies. By portraying the experiences of Shanichari, the film underscores the role of societal structures in commodifying individual emotions for cultural rituals. This critique aligns with Rao's (2009) exploration of caste politics, which highlights the systemic forces that exploit and marginalize lower-caste communities.

The narrative compels both viewers and scholars to confront the cultural mechanisms that sustain these inequalities, emphasizing the urgent need for structural changes to dismantle systemic oppression.

The themes presented in Rudali hold significant relevance for contemporary social justice movements. Advocacy for the rights of women employed in marginalized occupations frequently utilizes narratives such as that of Shanichari to illuminate instances of systemic exploitation. The resilience demonstrated by Shanichari in overcoming her adversities parallels the ongoing struggle for dignity and recognition faced by marginalized women today.

Organizations, such as the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), underscore the connections between historical injustices and current systemic discrimination, thereby highlighting the necessity of addressing these issues holistically.

Theoretical frameworks such as emotional labour Hochschild (1983), and intersectionality Crenshaw (1991), are essential for analyzing Shanichari's experiences. Emotional labour encompasses the management of emotions in professional settings, highlighting how individuals often suppress their feelings to meet external expectations.

This concept sheds light on how Shanichari navigates her grief within societal norms and pressures.

Conversely, intersectionality underscores the interconnected nature of social identities and how their intersections contribute to overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage. This framework enables an examination of how Shanichari's identities—encompassing race, gender, and class—interact to shape her experiences of grief and loss.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this research not only elucidates the specific challenges faced by Shanichari but also reveals the broader societal mechanisms that exploit her grief and perpetuate systemic inequities. This comprehensive approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the complexities in Shanichari's situation and the societal structures that influence her life.

Conclusion

This research investigates the significant impact of caste-based exploitation and the commodification of grief on marginalized women, as portrayed in the film "Rudali." Through analyzing Shanichari's journey, the film effectively illustrates the persistent effects of caste and gender discrimination, elucidating their psychological and socio-economic ramifications. Shanichari's transformation from a passive victim to a resilient survivor illustrates the capacity for agency and empowerment in the face of systemic oppression. This narrative serves not only as a critique of historical injustices women face but also emphasizes the urgent need to address their continued relevance in contemporary society, thereby encouraging critical reflection on these enduring issues.

Significance of the Research

This study significantly contributes to scholarly dialogue and social understanding in several key discourses:

1. **Connecting Historical and Modern Perspectives:** By relating the Rudali tradition to contemporary marginalized professions, this research provides a thorough understanding of ongoing systemic inequities.
2. **Emphasizing Intersectionality:** The focus on overlapping identities enhances conversations about caste, gender, and emotional labour, delivering deeper insights into the complexities of systemic oppression.

3. **Promoting Advocacy and Policy Development:** By exploring the psychological effects of marginalization, this study encourages the creation of initiatives to empower marginalized women and tackle widespread societal stigmas.

References

1. Roy, A. (1997). *The God of Small Things*. Harper Collins.
2. Tharu, S., & Lalita, K. (1991). *Women writing in India: 600 B.C. to the early twentieth century* (Vol. 1). Feminist Press.
3. Rao, A. (2009). *The caste question: Dalits and the politics of modern India*. University of California Press.
4. Ibsen, H. (1879). *A Doll's House*. [Original publication in Norwegian, translated versions will vary].
5. Devi, M. (1997). *Rudali: From fiction to performance.* (Trans. Anjum Katyal). Seagull Books.
6. Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: *Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of colour*. Stanford Law Review, 43(6), 1241–1299.
7. Devine, P. G., & Lawrence, J. S. (2006). *Stereotypes and prejudice: Their automatic and controlled components*. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56(1), 5–18.
8. Hochschild, A. R. (1983*). The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. University of California Press.
9. Tharu, S., & Lalita, K. (Eds.). (1991). *Women writing in India: 600 B.C. to the present*. Feminist Press at CUNY.
10. Lajmi, K. (1993). *Rudali*. NFDC India.

38

Sustainable Empowerment of Women through Fishery Activities in India

Sk Rahaman Ali & Dr. Joydev Maity

Abstract

Currently, India is recognized as the 3rd largest fishery industry in the world. India has a long coastline and numerous lakes and rivers that provide habitat for various species of fish. India's fisheries industry is also growing rapidly, now recognized as the leading producer of carp, catfish and shrimp in India. The Indian economy is largely dependent on the fisheries industry. Apart from this, it provides employment, exports, food and nutrition security. The size of the fisheries industry market has grown steadily in recent years. Growing from $208.01 billion in 2023 to $217.39 billion in 2024 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.5%. Women have played an important role in the growth of the family as well as the society. Besides, fisherwomen have been with the fishing industry for a long time. They played an important role in fisheries to provide a supplementary income for their families. They are involved in the activities of fish production, shortening, preservation, curing and fish marketing and sale etc. Therefore, the researcher is trying to show the participants and socio-economic status of fisherwomen. The study is based entirely on secondary data, data collected from the Department of Fisheries and published materials on fisheries statistics such as journals, newspapers, periodicals, books, reports etc.

Keyword: *Women Empowerment, Fisherwomen, participation, socio-economic and political empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

Before the discussion, it is good to say that no matter what happens in this world, there is some historical context behind it, and the way of women's empowerment concept started with the hands of feminist

theorist and feminist leaders. Therefore, to understand what is meant by women empowerment, it is necessary to have an understand of feminism. Feminism is an important ideology today. At the same time, the term feminism is a widely discussed topic, but not everyone has a clear idea about it. Feminist ideas were developed mainly to free women from the gender discrimination and exploitation of the society. Two features of feminism need to be mentioned here- Firstly, feminism is both an intellectual practice and a political movement because feminism was not only developed by the contribution of philosophers and theorists but those who took to the streets against the exploitation of women, against gender discrimination and for women's rights also fought feminism equally. Second, feminism is a multidimensional thought. Because the issues around which the feminist movement was built in the latter part of the 18th century naturally no longer have any relevance in the 21st century. At present, the issues of the movement of feminist theorists have taken a different turn. It is natural to say that women of different levels have been facing different problems at different times. And the picture of their exploitation is becoming different. So, it can be said that feminism is not a one-dimensional concept but a multi-dimensional. The term feminism was first used by the French utopian philosopher Charles Fourier in 1837. Regardless of how the term feminist was first used, interpreted and analyzed, the term gradually gained meaning. Because in the 18th century the world of Western intellect, scientific, cultural and philosophical thought started with the enlightenment, through which people became rational and thoughtful. During this period, especially the independence of America in 1776, the French Revolution in 1789, the Industrial Revolution in 1760 and the establishment of freedom, equality and rights of the people through the constitution of Poland-Lithuania, through which liberal thought emerged. But no change was observed in the condition of women. Therefore, the feminist movement became stronger with the help of the feminist philosophers of that time. They are Aphra Behn, Marry Astell, Marry Wollstonecraft, Jeremy Bentham, Marquis De Condorcet, Harriet Taylor Mill and John Stuart Mill etc. (Rajasri Basu, 2012). Women were not aware of the concept of women empowerment in the Indian context. It is good to say that Indian women enjoyed equal rights with men during the Vedic period but later on women were gradually deprived of their rights and forced to return to house life by the patriarchal society. There was a time when women were forced to wear veils (Purdah)

which curtailed their freedom. In those days, it was considered a matter of shame for a family to have a girl child. So, the girl was married off very early to reduce the burden on the family. Women have been exploited by the male society at different times in the name of sati-immolation, child- marriage and prohibition of remarriage etc. But great personalities like Issar Chandra Vidyasagar, Savitri Phule, Rammohan Roy, Pandita Ramabai and Swami Dayananda Saraswati are seen taking a leading role in rescuing women from this superstition. Although women gained freedom through a long struggle, the participation rate of women is still very low compared to men, be it politics, economy and socially women are still lagging behind. Now they have returned to a much better position than in the past and are slowly becoming self-reliant.

Through this research paper I will try to see how the socio-economic and political development of women is possible through fishery activities. It is good to say at the beginning of the discussion that today the fish sector is one of the largest growing platforms through which millions of people in the world depend for their livelihood. Fish industry is an important resource of India today. Because fish is rich in protein which is consumed as food by millions of people in India. Besides, the fish industry earns a lot of foreign exchange. By which it makes significant contribution to the Indian economy. In 2022- 2023, about 175.45 lakh tonnes of fish are produced in India. Every Indian consumes about 13 kg of fish per year as a food.

Women's contribution to the fast-test pace of fish farming is undeniable. Women are breaking out of the old confines of the house and are increasingly participating in projects for the betterment of society. But it is also true that women are coming out of the house to participate in social welfare and at the same time they have to do housework as well (Krishna Vetrivel, 2015). However, the participation of women in fish-based activities is being noticed at a large rate. Mainly coastal women have higher participation rate in fisheries than inland women. In particular, all the activities that women are involved in fish farming can be divided into three categories - fishing, processing and marketing. Today, Indian women are improving their livelihoods through their participation in the fish industry while also succeeding in ensuring poverty and food security (Cliffe, 2013).

Who are Fisherwomen

Fisherwomen are women who are involved in fishing activities, which involve catching or collecting fish and other aquatic animals from rivers, lakes, oceans or other bodies of water. Historically, fishing has often been associated with men, but women have also played important roles in various fishing communities around the world. Fishermen can be found in a variety of roles within the fisheries industry. They may work as traditional fishermen, catching fish using nets, traps or lines, or they may engage in aquaculture, which is the farming of fish and other aquatic species. In some communities, women are responsible for processing and selling fish, managing fish markets and contributing to overall economic activities related to fishing. The role of fisherwomen can vary depending on cultural, social and economic factors. In many places, women have been actively involved in fishing for generations, passing down their knowledge and skills through families or communities. Recognition of the important contribution of women fishermen has increased and efforts are being made to ensure their equal participation, rights and opportunities in the fishing industry.

The Role of Fisherwomen

The role of women in the fishery industry is significant and diverse, encompassing various aspects of the sector. While the extent of women's involvement may vary across different regions and cultures, they play crucial roles in both traditional and modern fishing communities. Here are some key aspects of the role of women in the fishery industry:

A. fish processing and marketing

B. small scale fishing

C. aquaculture

D. community management

E. education and capacity building

F. policy advocacy

G. research and extension services

The Rights of Fisherwomen

Both men and women should be accorded equal rights and be able to participate in the development process, and their interests

and needs should be adequately protected and met. International human rights law recognizes equal rights for all, yet women are left behind in the mainstream of society. However, there is always the risk of new income-generating opportunities for women being taken over by men. For example, as seen in the development of the oyster culture industry in India (which was once traditionally run by women), once the activity became profitable, men also began to engage in the culture and women were pushed out of the industry. Women must therefore be allowed to participate in decision-making processes and provided with physical and capital resources to develop their industries and fulfil their needs and aspirations. The need to provide them with training and formal education to improve the efficiency, profitability and sustainability of their operations; and to ensure access to equipment, information-technology and markets. This will support their enterprise, increase their income potential and reduce their marginalization (FAO, 2016).

Figure-1: Endorsement of agricultural investment policies to address insecurity in protracted food

Source – FAO,2016

What are the main Obstacles of Empowerment of Women

They have faced various kind of obstacles and challenges that hinder the women's self-realization and women's equalities. Some common obstacles mention bellow-

- gender discrimination
- unequal access to education
- workplace discrimination

- violence against women
- limited economic opportunities
- healthcare disparities
- political underrepresentation
- lack of support system

Review of Literatures

This study related literature review will help the researcher to understand and interpret the significance of the present study from the findings obtained from the past studies.

Cliffe, P. (2013). he said that women play an important role in fish activities, yet their role is given equal prominence to that of men. Women are involved in fisheries to generate income to support family values using fish marketing and processing, which is crucial for enhancing nutritional quality and food security. Women should be encouraged to participate fully in fisheries activities by establishing cooperative societies, providing soft credit through more participatory extension programs and enhancing their skills.

Krishnan Vetrivel. (2015). he mainly showed here that women are making an important contribution to the development of society. They are participating in fish farming with men besides housework. Through the participation of women in this fish farming, they are generating a supportive income for their families. And all the activities in which they participate in fish farming are: preserving, packing, marketing and selling etc. Their workload is much higher than that of men as they participate in fish farming in addition to family work, so they need to be given technical education and training in its use through which they can be economically self-sufficient with less work.

Karuna Unperson. (1985). explains that marine fishermen are members of a low and disadvantaged caste belonging to the lowest economic strata of Indian society. Fisherwomen, in particular, have a very low status in the social hierarchy, making them worse off than their compatriots.

Shobna Warrier m. V. (2001). the fish processing industry is spread along the coast of the Indian subcontinent and employs more than one lakh workers. A small component of permanent workers in processing units shows administration and maintenance. It is focused on the migrant category. Women workers and their working

environment. While most of these migrant workers are from Kerala, late women from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have also found employment in the sector. Meetei, W. T., Saha, B., & Pal, P. (2016). Explain that fisheries are viable venture and very suitable for rural women to practice and empower them economically and socially. Therefore, financial institutions and NGOs should come forward to extend financial assistance and guidance to rural women through Self Help Groups to take up fisheries as an income generating activity. The results of the study indicated that the empowerment gain through fisheries activities was 35 percent and the total empowerment after participating in fisheries activities was 66 percent, indicating that there is still scope for women's empowerment by adopting contributing factors. The significant and positive relationship between women's participation in aquaculture and the extent of their empowerment suggests that women's empowerment status may increase as their participation in aquaculture increases. As aquaculture is a relatively lucrative income-generating activity, participating women gain greater control over economic and social income. It makes them self-reliant and enhances their empowerment status in the family as well as society in general.

Dissanayaka and Wijeyaratne. (2010). have focused reviewing the participation of women in fisheries in her Wellwediya village in Negombo, Sri Lanka. Discussed the socio-economic status of women who are involved in fish farming. The women involved in this fishery were illiterate. Besides this fishing, they also had to do their household work.

Ashaletha, S and Ramachandran, C and Immanuel, Sheela and Diwan, A D and Sathiadhas, R. (2002). they are discussed participation of women in fish culture has not been successful yet. Various social, psychological, institutional and economic issues challenging the empowerment of fisherwomen should be seriously considered, and new development strategies should be devised. Researchers should also pay considerable attention to identifying the needs of fisherwomen and thereby developing women- friendly technologies for production. Empowerment of women and thereby the development of society requires a holistic approach for the combined efforts of men and women.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Our society is built with half of the world's population being women and half being men. At present, women are participating in fish farming in addition to housework along with men. Through which they are gradually becoming self-reliant. About 5.4 million people are currently involved in fish farming in India, of which 3.8 million are men and 1.6 million are women. In this fish industry, women are particularly involved in two activities, fish marketing and fish processing. Through this fishing they help his family financially. Regions where fish farming is particularly trending in India are Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. The participation of women in all these areas is noticeable. However, no single and young women are seen participating in this fishing industry, rather elderly and widowed women are particularly involved. Although the contribution of women in the fisheries industry is undeniable, they face some challenges for sustainable development. For example- gender disparities in fisheries access and resources, limited participation and decision making by women, barriers to women's entrepreneurship, social and cultural constraints, effectiveness of existing policies, market dynamics and income disparities, and legal framework and women's rights etc. Therefore, the researcher is interested in doing research on the socio-economic status of fisherwomen.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

To find out the participation of fisherwomen in India.

To find out the socio-economic status of fisherwomen in India.

METHODOLOGY

STUDY AREA

India is a country located in South Asia in the Indian subcontinent. India is bordered by Pakistan to the northwest, China and Nepal to the north, Bhutan to the northeast, Bangladesh and Myanmar to the east. On the south, it is bounded by the Indian Ocean. It also shares maritime borders with Sri Lanka to the south and the Maldives to the southwest. The geographical coordinates of India range from approximately 8.4°N to 37.6°N latitude and 68.7°E to 97.25°E longitude. The total land border length of India is about 15,106.7 km. India shares land borders with neighbouring countries: about 3,323

km with Pakistan, about 3,488 km with China, about 1,751 km with Nepal, about 699 km with Bhutan, about 4,093 km with Bangladesh and 1,600 km with Myanmar.

Figure-2

Source-*https://stock.adobe.com/in/search?k =map+of +india+ globe&asset_id=696420351*

METHOD

I have applied descriptive with quantitative and qualitative method to understand the "Sustainable Empowerment of Women Through Fishery Activities in India"

DATA COLLECTION

This study is completely based on secondary data. The data collected from the Directorate of Fisheries and fisheries statistics published materials like Journals, News Papers, Periodicals, Books, report etc.

HYPOTHESIS

For my research I have constructed a hypothesis for the tested statistical analysis appropriately.

NULL HYPOTHESES (H0)

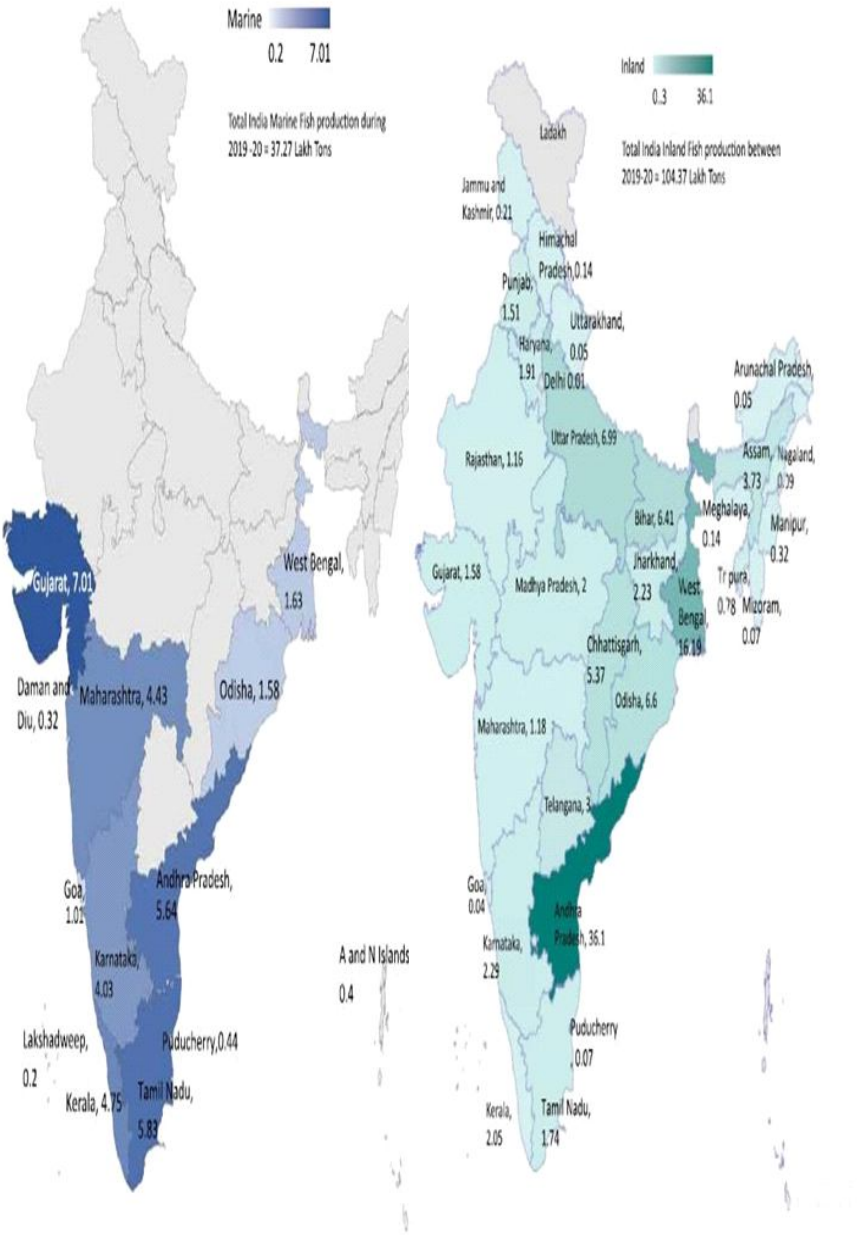
Fishery activities are not proving sustainable empowerment of women in India.

RESULT

Half of the world's population is female and half is male. There are currently 4 billion women in the world where the male population are 4.4 billion and gender ratio in the world in 2023 is 101.016 males per 100 females. The total population of India is about 70 crore women and where the number of men is 74. 50 crores. For this reason, the state of India is considered to have the highest female population in the world. Women in the world including India are seen facing various problems from ancient times to present day where women are exploited by men. Despite these various problems, Indian women are seen to participate in various activities besides housework for their socio-economic development. But I'm trying to show in this article that only where are the position of women in the fishery industry. The participation of unmarried and young women in the fishing industry is not seen. But especially widows and oldest women are associated with this fishery. The main activities they have to do in this fishery are fish farming, fish catching, fish conservation and fish selling etc. The impact of fish farming is especially noticeable in the coastal areas of India, hence the participation and extent of coastal women in fish farming is also high. While the number of women associated with fishing in inland is comparatively much less compared to coastal women. Fisheries industry is currently one of the largest glowing sectors through which a lot of employment is being generated. Government of India is able to bring Blue Revolution in Fish Farming. Because from 2020 to 2025 these five years about 20050 crores have been invested for sustainable development. Presently 0.5 million females engage of in this fishery activities.

So, the researcher has graphically represented the actual status of fisherwomen in India-

Figure No: 3- Marine Fish Production: 2019-20 (In Lakh Tones)- Inland Fish Production: 2019-20 (In Lakh Tones).



Source- *Handbook on fisheries statistics: 2022*

Table-1 The state wise women participation in India- 2010-2011

SI NO	NAME OF THE STATE	FEMALE	PERCENTAGES
1	ANDRA PRADESH	250877	6.21
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	1376	0.03
3	ASSAM	97986	2.42
4	BIHAR	126697	31.41
5	CHATTISGARH	529697	13.13
6	GOA	483	0.12
7	GUJRAT	129900	3.22
8	HARYANA	3322	0.08
9	HIMACHAL PRADESH	1372	0.03
10	JAMMU & KASHMIR	7593	0.2
11	JHARKHAND	571584	14.2
12	KARNATAKA	52898	1.31
13	KERALA	317758	14.2
14	MADHYA PRADESH	200607	5.0
15	MAHARASTRA	46606	1.15
16	MANIPUR	24091	0.6
17	MEGHALAYA	504	0.01
18	MIZORAM	5312	0.13
19	NAGALAND	5519	0.13
20	ODISHA	48334	1.2
21	PUNJAB	1874	0.04
22	RAJASTHAN	1693	0.04
23	SIKKIM	8353	0.20
24	TAMIL NADU	156107	3.9
25	TRIPURA	13177	0.32
26	UTTAR PRADESH	48892	1.21
27	UTTARAKHAND	23	0.0005
28	WEST BENGAL	205198	5.1
29	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLAND	7693	0.2
30	CHANDIGARH	109	0.002
31	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	-	-
32	DAMAN & DIU	7756	0.2
33	DELHI	475	0.01
34	LAKSHADWEEP	2621	0.06
35	PUDUCHERRY	12799	0.31
	TOTAL (INDIA)	**4033963**	**100**

Table No:2

	Male	Female	Total
Inland	1,30,13,978	1,01,03,842	**2,31,17,820**
Marine	26,51,652	22,94,065	**49,45,717**
All India	1,56,65,630	1,23,97,907	**2,80,63,537**

Graph No: 1

Gender-wise participation in India 2019-2020

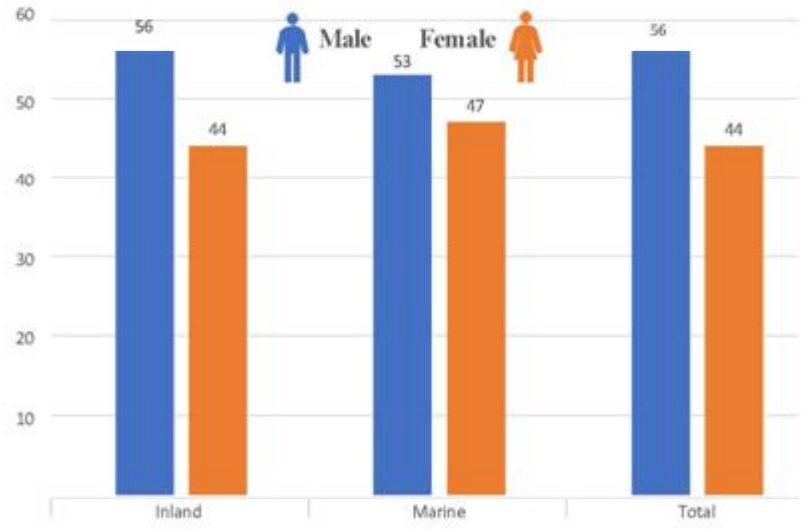


Table -3

Work wise Distribution of Fisherwomen in India

SI NO	TYPES OF WORK	NO OF WOMEN WORKERS	PERCENTAGE
1	Beech Workers	5612	6.54
2	Small scale fish traders	20,220	23.58
3	Fish Curers	14,028	16.36
4	Peeling Workers	39397	45.94
5	Processing Plant Workers	6504	7.58
	Total	**85761**	**100**

Source *Madhulatha G, Southern Economist, 201*

DISCUSSION

we are trying to show here that the effect of fisheries in some states in India can be observed. In this case, we can see that the impact of marine fish production can be observed in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Lakshadweep, Kerala, Goa and West Bengal at the same time in the case of inland fish production, the trend of fisheries in most of the regions of India except Ladakh. In the year 2019-20, marine fish production was about 37.27 lakh tones and inland fish production was about 104.37 lakh tones. In India the trend of fish culture is being observed in all the states but it is to be seen what percentage of Indian women are associated with this work (Figure number 3).

We are trying to show the state-wise participation of women in fish culture in India. In 2010, the total number of registered women was 4033963 at the end of March. Among which the participation and its impact is noticed particularly in three states like Bihar (31.41 percent), Jharkhand (14.02 percent) and Chhattisgarh (13.13 percent). These three-state obtained 58% of the fish culture in India. and also Andhra Pradesh (6.21 percent), assam (2.42 percent), Madhya Pradesh (5 percent), Tamil Nadu (3.9 percent) and west Bengal (5.1 percent) (Table number 1).

Here we will be discussed, the gendered-wise participation fisherwomen in India. The participation of women in the field of fish farming was noticeable, where 1,01,03,842 women participated in inland and 22,94,065 women engaged in marine fish culture. In all and 1,23,97,907 women are seen participating (Table number 2).

Here we can see that work-wise distribution of fisherwomen in India. in this field, women are participating different types of activity, like Beech Workers, Small scale fish traders, Fish Curers, Peeling Workers and Processing Plant Workers. Where total 85761 women are participating in which Beech Workers is 6.54% (5612), Small scale fish traders is 23.58% (20,220), Fish Curers is 16.36% (14028), Peeling Workers is 45.94% (39397) and Processing Plant Workers 7.58% (6504) (Table number 3).

CONCLUSION

In the discussion of above, we can say that fisherwomen are participating diversified activities in fishery industry. The participation of women in the fishing industry is increasing day by day. If we look at the above data, we can see that there is a huge difference between the female participation rate in 2010 and the female participation rate in 2019. While 4033963 women participated in 2010, and 1,23,97,907 women are seen participating in 2019. Fisherwomen are participating different types of activity, like Beech Workers, Small scale fish traders, Fish Curers, Peeling Workers and Processing Plant Workers. And also, they are participating in net mending, food preparation, fish production, fish shorting, fish preservation, fish pickling, and fish selling. 2020-2025 these five years about 20050 crores have been invested for sustainable development by the India government under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana. Presently 0.5 million fisherwomen engaged of in this fishery activities. Along with the gradual increase in women's participation in the fisheries industry, the Indian government is also investing a lot of money in the fisheries industry. So, fisherwomen are also getting economic opportunities, through which they are succeeding in their financial and social development.

RECOMMENDATION & SUGGESTION

With the passage of time, increasing the participation of women in the fishery industry and the government's financial investment efforts are being noticed in India. Along with this, some recommendations to the government and non-governmental organizations should take a positive role for the development of fisherwomen and those recommendations are- to educate women, to increase awareness, to provide technical education, to develop open market for fisherwomen and to reduced gender discrimination. And more emphasis should be given to marine fishing as well as inland

fishing so that a large number of women can participate in this fishery activities and bring about their socio- economic change.

References

1. Rajasri Basu (2012), "Nari Bad", West Bengal State Book Board, Kolkata, pp. 1-16. Krishnan Vetrivel (2015), "Fisher Women", LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, Germany.
2. Cliffe, P. (2013). *The role of women in fishery activities in some coastal communities of Rivers State, Nigeria*. https: / / aquadocs.org / handle / 1834 / 39084
3. *Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in fisheries and aquaculture | Policy Support and Governance | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*. (n.d.). https: / / www.fao.org / policy-support / tools-and-publications / resources-details / en / c / 1027810 /
4. Cliffe, P. (2013). *The role of women in fishery activities in some coastal communities of Rivers State, Nigeria*. http: / / hdl.handle.net / 1834 / 39084
5. Karuna Anparasan (1985), "Bay of Bengal Programme: Development of Small-Scale Fisheries", Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, pp.1-10.
6. Shobhana Warrier M. V (2001), "Women at Work: Migrant Women in Fish Processing Industry", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXVL., No. 37, pp.3554-3562
7. Meetei, W. T., Saha, B., & Pal, P. (2016). Participation of women in fisheries: A study on gender issues in Manipur, India. *ResearchGate*. https: / / doi.org / 10.5958 / 0976-4038.2016.00145.7
8. Dissanayaka, D., & Wijeyaratne, M. (2010). Impact of women involvement in fisheries on socio- economics of fisher households in Negombo, Sri Lanka. *Sri Lanka Journal of Aquatic Sciences*, *14*, 45–57. https: / / doi.org / 10.4038 / sljas.v14i0.2199
9. Ashaletha, S and Ramachandran, C and Immanuel, Sheela and Diwan, A D and Sathiadhas, R (2002). *Changing Roles of Fisherwomen of India Issues & Perspectives.* In: Proceedings of International Conference on Women in Fisheries, 2002, Mumbai. http: / / eprints.cmfri.org.in / id / eprint / 5646
10. *Map of India Globe Images – Browse 13,892 stock photos, vectors, and video*. (n.d.-b). Adobe Stock. https: / / stock.adobe.com / in / search?k=map+of+india+globe&asset_id=696420351
11. Madhulatha G (2012), "Obstacles to Economic Empowerment of Fisherwomen in Nellore District", Southern Economist, Vol. 51, No. 5, pp.21-24.

39

Women Empowerment in the Indian Context

Dr. Chandan Sarkar

Abstract

Women empowerment in India has been a topic of significant discourse in recent decades, especially with respect to education, health, employment, political participation, Social Security and social justice. Despite several initiatives and policies by the government, women in India continue to face numerous challenges. This research paper explores the progress and challenges of women empowerment in India using data analysis. Key areas such as education, labour force participation, political representation, Gender Equality and gender-based violence are examined, followed by recommendations for accelerating the women empowerment.

Keywords: *Women Empowerment, Gender Equality, Education, Health, Employment, Policy, Social Security, Social Justice.*

Introduction

Women empowerment is a multifaceted concept that involves improving women's access to resources, rights, opportunities, and their ability to make decisions in personal, economic, and political spheres. In India, a country with a diverse socio-economic and cultural landscape, women empowerment has been influenced by historical, social, and political factors. Although there has been substantial progress over the years, gender inequality persists, particularly in rural areas, in the workforce, and in the political arena.

The aims of these studies to analyses the women's status in India, examine their empowerment indicators, and understand the barriers to achieving gender equality. The analysis focuses on education,

employment, health, and political representation as the key pillars of empowerment.

Objectives

1. To analyze the current status of women empowerment in India.
2. To study the impact of education, employment, and political participation on women empowerment.
3. To understand regional disparities in women's empowerment.
4. To identify the key challenges in empowering women in India.

Literature Review

Women empowerment in India has been studied extensively in academic research. Key findings include:

- **Education**: Women's literacy rate in India has been steadily rising, but the gender gap persists, particularly in rural areas. According to the Census of India 2011, the female literacy rate stands at 65.46%, compared to 82.14% for males.
- **Economic Empowerment**: Women's participation in the workforce has been low historically, although there has been a rise in female participation in sectors like education, healthcare, and business. As per the International Labour Organization (ILO), India's female labour force participation rate (LFPR) in 2020 was 20.3%, far below the global average of 47.7%.
- **Political Empowerment**: Women's representation in Indian politics has increased over the years. As of the 2019 general elections, women held 14.4% of the seats in the Lok Sabha, 13.62 % female MP in 18th Lok Sabha,2024, 2.9% female MP in 1st Lok Sabha,1957. However, India's ranking on the Gender Inequality Index (GII) by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicates significant gender inequality.
- **Gender-Based Violence**: India has seen high rates of gender-based violence. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), crimes against women increased by 7.3% in 2019, with incidents like dowry deaths, sexual assault, and domestic violence.

Database and Methodology

The analysis uses secondary data collected from government sources, research studies, and international organizations. Key data sources include:

1. **Census of India 2011 and 2021**: Literacy rates, education levels, and workforce participation.
2. **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)**: Data on health indicators and gender disparity.
3. **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**: Data on crime rates and incidents of violence against women.
4. **International Labour Organization (ILO)**: Data on labour force participation and gender inequality.
5. **World Economic Forum (WEF)**: Gender Gap Report for measuring political representation and overall gender parity.

Women Empowerment Scenario in India

1. Education and Literacy

❖ **Female Literacy Rate**: According to the Census 2011, the female literacy rate is 65.46%, a significant improvement from 53.67% in 2001. However, the gender gap remains substantial compared to the male literacy rate of 82.14%.

❖ **Enrolment in Schools**: Data from the Ministry of Education shows that enrolment rates for girls in primary and secondary schools have steadily increased, with gender parity achieved in many states. However, dropout rates are higher for girls, especially in rural areas and among marginalized communities.

2. Workforce Participation

➢ **Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR)**: The female LFPR in India has been historically low, with data showing a decline in recent years. According to the ILO, in 2020, the female LFPR was 20.3%, compared to the global average of 47.7%. The reasons for low participation include societal expectations, gender biases, and limited access to decent work opportunities.

Female Labor Force Participation Rate (2020)

❖ **Sectoral Distribution**: Women are predominantly employed in agriculture (about 70%), followed by the services sector. However,

their participation in high-value sectors like manufacturing and IT remains limited.

3. Political Participation

❖ **Representation in Lok Sabha**: As of the 2019 Indian general elections, women held 14.4% of the seats in the Lok Sabha. This marks a gradual increase from previous elections, but India still ranks behind other countries in terms of female political representation.

Women Representation in Lok Sabha

4. Gender-Based Violence

❖ **Crime Rates**: Data from the NCRB reveals that incidents of violence against women, including dowry deaths, sexual assaults, and domestic violence, have increased in recent years. In 2019, there were over 4 lakh reported crimes against women.

Crimes against women (2019)

Women Empowerment in West Bengal

- ❖ Historical context: Women's movements in Bengal, from the early 20th century to present.
- ❖ State-specific policies, such as the Kanyashree Prakalpa (for girl child education), Sabuj Sathi (bicycle distribution program for girls), and others.
- ❖ **Representation in Panchayats and Local Bodies:** Women's reservation in local governance, such as the 33% reservation for women in Panchayats (rural and urban local bodies).

Discussion

The data reveals that significant strides have been made in women's education and political representation in India. However, challenges remain, particularly in the areas of economic empowerment and gender-based violence. The gender wage gap continues to persist, and women's representation in leadership positions is still low. Furthermore, while more women are entering the workforce, many face discrimination and limited opportunities for advancement.

The increasing rates of gender-based violence highlight the ongoing societal barriers that women face, even as legal frameworks have been strengthened. The rise in women's empowerment indicators can be attributed to a variety of policies such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, the provision of maternity leave, and quotas for women in local governance. However, cultural attitudes and regional disparities continue to inhibit full empowerment.

Women Rights in India

The guideline of equivalence status of women is cherished in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The constitution provides equity to women, yet in addition enables the State to make provisions of positive discrimination in favour of women. Some of the significant articles are as per the following

1. Equality before law[Article 14]
2. No Discrimination by state on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them[Article15(i)]
3. Special provision by state in favour of Women and Children[Article 15(3)]
4. Equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment [Article 16]
5. Securing adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally [Article 39(a)]
6. Equal pay for equal work[Article 39(d)]
7. Promoting justice on basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid[Article 39(A)] Renounce practices derogatory to women[Article 51(A)(e)]
8. 1/3 reservation for women in panchayats [Article 243(D)] and in municipalities [Article 243(T)]
9. Right to Property to Women[Article 300(a)]

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, 13. National Mission for Empowerment of Women, 14. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975), 15. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescence Girls (RGSEAG) (2010), 16. The Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers, 17. Integrated Child Protection scheme (ICPS) (2009-2010), 18. Dhanalakahmi (2008), 19. Short Stay Homes, 20. Ujjawala (2007), 21. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015), 22.Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (2017). Women's Helpline (24*7).

Recommendations

1. **Education and Skill Development**: Strengthen efforts to reduce the gender gap in education, with a focus on rural and marginalized communities. Provide vocational training and skill development programs to ensure that women are prepared for the modern workforce.
2. **Economic Opportunities**: Create more inclusive policies to promote women's participation in the labour force. This includes enhancing access to credit, land ownership, and legal protections for women entrepreneurs.
3. **Political Representation**: Introduce affirmative action in national and state legislatures to increase female representation in politics. Implement training programs for women in leadership and governance roles.
4. **Address Gender-Based Violence**: Strengthen the enforcement of laws against gender-based violence, enhance support systems for survivors, and create awareness programs to change societal attitudes toward women.

Conclusion

Women empowerment in India has witnessed significant progress in recent decades, but there are still substantial challenges to be addressed. The data analysis highlights the need for targeted policies

and sustained efforts to close gender gaps in education, employment, and political representation. A multi-pronged approach, including education, economic empowerment, legal reforms, and cultural change, is necessary to create an environment where women can fully realize their potential.

References:

1. Altekar, A. S. (1983). Position of women in Hindu Civilization. Banaras: The Culture publication House, Banaras Hindu University.
2. Census of India 2011. (2011). Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
3. Desai, Neera. (1977). Women in modern India. Mumbai: Vora Company.
4. Devandra, Kiran. (1985). Status and position of women in India. With Special Reference to Women in Contemporary India. New Delhi: Shakti Books.
5. Election commission of India 1951-2024
6. International Labour Organization (ILO). (2020). India Labour Market Update
7. Krishnaraj, Maithveyi. (1986). Women's studies in India. Bombay Popular Prakasham.
8. K. Sayulu, G. Sardar & B. Sridevi "Impact of Self-Help Groups on Women Empowerment- An Empirical Study," Management Researcher, XI No.3 & 4, January – June 2005, p.22.
9. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). (2019). Crime in India Report
10. National Family Health Survey (NFHS), 2015-16. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
11. Saravanakumar, A. R. (2016). Present scenario of women's education in India. In a National Seminar sponsored by ICHR on Educational Practices in Chola Kingdom (850 – 1279 AD) EPICK – 2016 organized by Department of History & DDE, Alagappa University, Karaikudi.
12. World Economic Forum (WEF). (2020). Global Gender Gap Report.

40

Inequality, Education, Employment, and Marginalised Sections

Dr. Madhop Mandal & Dr. Moumita Roy

Abstract

This paper explores the interconnected relationship between inequality, education, and employment, with a particular focus on marginalized sections of society. By examining structural disparities in education and employment opportunities, the paper highlights how systemic barriers perpetuate inequality and hinder socioeconomic mobility. It also proposes policy interventions aimed at fostering equity and inclusivity. Inequality remains a persistent issue globally, manifesting in various forms such as income disparities, lack of access to quality education, and exclusion from employment opportunities. Marginalized sections, including women, ethnic minorities, disabled individuals, and economically disadvantaged groups, are disproportionately affected. This paper delves into the multifaceted dimensions of inequality and their implications for education and employment.

Keywords: *Inequality, Education, Employment, and Marginalised Sections*

Inequality

Inequality manifests in various forms, including economic, social, and systemic disparities. Factors such as caste, race, gender, and geographic location exacerbate inequities. Unequal access to resources perpetuates generational poverty and marginalization.

Education

Education is a key driver for reducing inequality but remains unequally distributed. Marginalised communities face barriers such

as lack of infrastructure, cultural biases, and inadequate policy implementation. Inclusive education policies and affirmative actions are essential for equitable outcomes.

Employment

Marginalised groups encounter limited opportunities and discrimination in the labour market. Informal sectors employ a significant proportion of marginalised workers, often under exploitative conditions. Skills development, affirmative hiring practices, and labour rights enforcement are crucial for improvement.

Marginalised Sections

Marginalised groups include those disadvantaged by socio-economic, cultural, or political factors, such as women, minorities, indigenous people, and people with disabilities. They often face multiple intersecting forms of discrimination. Empowerment requires targeted policy interventions, representation, and social inclusion measures.

Interconnections

Inequality in education limits employment opportunities, perpetuating economic disparities. Addressing one dimension of inequality can have positive ripple effects across other areas. Holistic approaches combining education reform, employment generation, and anti-discrimination policies are needed to uplift marginalised groups. For solutions, education equity, vocational training, and grassroots advocacy can be transformative.

Introduction: Being on the margins is a slippery and multi-layered concept. Entire societies can be marginalized on a global level, while groups and communities can be marginalized from the dominant social order. Similarly, ethnic groups, families, or individuals can be marginalized at a local level. To some extent, marginalization is a dynamic phenomenon linked to social status. For instance, individuals or groups may enjoy a high social status at one point of time, but as social changes occur, they may lose this status and become marginalized. Similarly, as life cycle stages change, the marginalized status of individuals can also shift. Marginalization lies at the core of all social, political, and economic struggles, where vulnerable groups are the ones who suffer the most. Women, persons with disabilities, Dalits, the elderly, children, minorities, the poor, sexual minorities,

and others are the most vulnerable to marginalization. Inequality, education, employment, and marginalized sections are key aspects of a society's social, economic, and cultural development. These issues are not only interconnected but also influence and deepen each other. In a diverse and vast country like India, where a significant portion of the population is economically, socially, and educationally backward, the role of these factors becomes even more crucial. This seminar paper provides a comprehensive analysis of these issues and considers the steps that need to be taken toward their resolution.

Society is made up of groups of people belonging to different religions, castes, cultures, and communities. The Indian Constitution guarantees equality to all citizens without any discrimination. However, even today, many sections of Indian society face inequality. They are being pushed from the centre of society toward the margins, which is defined as the marginalized class. This is a class that is completely deprived of food, education, health, respect, and dignity. Inequality hinders the development and progress of society and creates obstacles to the establishment of the society. It leads to social, economic, and political imbalance within society. Inequality refers to the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, rights, and prestige among different individuals or groups in society. This inequality can be based on various factors such as economic status, social class, gender, caste, religion, education, and geographical location. Inequality poses a significant challenge to social justice and harmony. It negatively impacts various social, economic, and political aspects, Inequality promotes division, discrimination, and injustice, making it a challenge for societal stability and harmony.

Objective of the Study:

This paper, an attempt will be made to understand which individuals and groups are categorized as the marginalized class and identify **the major problems of them. Also analysed the reasons behind them for their educational backwardness. And the measures to be taken by the government to improve the education, living style of marginalized groups.**

Different Section of Vulnerable, Marginalized, and Neglected Groups/ Communities:

According to the European Union, groups that experience greater poverty and social exclusion compared to the general population are termed vulnerable groups. Marginalized groups refer to those who

are socially excluded and pushed to the periphery of society's mainstream. Generally, the interests of such groups are overlooked. These groups struggle to ensure access to resources and participate in social life. They are often categorized as minority groups.

Neglected groups include people who do not have guaranteed and independent access to their assured rights. The definition of these groups belongs to the changes mainly depending on the social, cultural, and economic conditions. People facing discrimination based on gender, race, birth, community, or religion are included in this category. Discriminatory behaviour against vulnerable, neglected, and marginalized groups often manifests as insult, harassment, and intimidation. Such behaviours are frequently supported by inappropriate social, political, economic traditions, and cultural practices.

Women and Girls: Women and girls globally fall under the category of neglected groups. However, women in developing countries face greater vulnerability due to social and cultural malpractices, such as discrimination, sexual exploitation, violence, rape, low wages, and poverty, as compared to women in developed countries.

Key Issues Faced by Women and Girls:

1. **Health-Related Problems:** Lack of proper healthcare services for pregnant women and infants. Malnutrition, which increases infant mortality rates. High maternal mortality rates.
2. **Lack of Education:** Girls' education is not prioritized, especially in rural and impoverished communities. Literacy rates of women are lower compared to men.
3. **Economic Insecurity:** Limited employment opportunities for women. Absence of equal pay for equal work and unstable working conditions. Lack of financial independence.
4. **Social Inequality:** Problems such as child marriage, dowry practices, and domestic violence. Violation of women's and children's rights due to societal and religious traditions.

Children: Children fall into the category of vulnerable and neglected groups due to numerous issues such as poverty and malnutrition. Currently, children also face challenges like child labour and sexual exploitation. They represent a segment of society deprived of mainstream facilities and opportunities. These children often endure

poverty, discrimination, violence, and exploitation, which negatively impact their physical, mental, and emotional development. Many children are deprived of education and forced into child labour. Increasing cases of exploitation and trafficking.

Key Issues Faced by Marginalized Children:

1. **Lack of Education:** Poverty and discrimination prevent children from attending school. Lack of education restricts future employment and growth opportunities. Girls are often forced into household work instead of receiving education.
2. **Malnutrition and Health Issues:** Lack of nutritious food hinders physical and mental development. Insufficient vaccination and healthcare facilities. Diseases caused by the lack of clean drinking water and sanitation.
3. **Child Labour and Exploitation:** Due to poverty, children are forced to work at an early age. They face physical and mental exploitation while working in hazardous conditions.
4. **Child Marriage:** Child marriage remains prevalent in rural and impoverished communities. It adversely affects both the education and health of girls.
5. **Child Trafficking and Exploitation:** Children are trafficked for forced labour, begging, or sexual exploitation. There is an inadequate system for their protection and rehabilitation.
6. **Mental and Emotional Problems:** Due to poverty, violence, and neglect, children suffer from stress, depression, and other mental illnesses. They lack support and love from family and society.

Migrant Workers:

According to the United Nations, a migrant worker is a person who is or has been engaged in remunerated activities in a country of which they are not a citizen. The term "migrant worker" holds different meanings in different parts of the world. It pertains to both international and domestic migrants. Migrant workers are individuals who move from their home state or country to another location in search of employment. They migrate for economic, social, and personal reasons. However, they face numerous challenges that make their lives and livelihoods difficult.

Key Problems Faced by Migrant Workers:

1. **Employment Uncertainty:** Migrant workers often work on a temporary or contractual basis, which lacks job stability. They are required to work more for lower wages. Marginalized migrant workers do not receive even the minimum wage and frequently work in the unorganized sector, where exploitation is common.
2. **Housing Issues:** It is challenging for them to find proper and affordable housing. They are often forced to live in filthy and overcrowded settlements. These areas lack basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation, and electricity
3. **Violation of Workers' Rights:** Migrant workers are often deprived of their rights, such as access to healthcare services, social security, and workplace safety. They lack access to social security schemes like insurance, pensions, and health benefits. Due to the absence of permanent identity documents, they cannot avail themselves of government welfare schemes.

4. Social Discrimination:

Migrant workers frequently face discrimination, humiliation, and social rejection due to differences in language, culture, or ethnic background. Being from another state or country often leads to social rejection. They sometimes become victims of violence and harassment.

5. **Lack of Education and Healthcare Facilities:** Their children have limited access to education and healthcare services. Many children of migrant workers are unable to attend school. Inadequate healthcare facilities prevent them from receiving treatment for even minor illnesses.
6. **Insecurity During Disasters Like COVID-19:** Migrant workers faced severe challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns led to job losses, forcing them to struggle to return home.Their situation worsened during such crises as they lacked jobs and resources. They have been faced many problems to return back to their native places.

Refugees: Refugees are individuals who flee their country to seek temporary asylum in another country. The reasons for their migration may include famine, civil war, religious discrimination, epidemics, or other causes. Refugees are often deprived of basic human rights.

They are people forced to leave their homes due to war, political persecution, ethnic violence, religious discrimination, or natural disasters. During displacement from their country and while seeking refuge elsewhere, they face numerous challenges. Being marginalized means they are not given a proper place in the social, economic, and political systems.

Key Issues Faced by Refugees:

1. **Employment and Economic Situation:** Refugees struggle to find work in their host countries. Due to the lack of legal identity or local regulations, they are often considered ineligible for employment. They frequently work in low-paying and unsafe jobs. They face exploitation due to limited job opportunities and the absence of legal rights and protections
2. **Lack of Shelter and Basic Amenities:** Refugees are often forced to live in temporary camps or slums. Basic necessities like clean water, food, healthcare services, and education are not available to them.
3. **Social Discrimination and Rejection:**

   Local communities often view refugees as "outsiders." They face discriminatory behaviour, which prevents them from integrating into society. Refugees are excluded on racial, religious, and cultural grounds, and local communities do not accept them.

4. **Legal and Identity Issues:**

   Refugees often lack proper documentation, which prevents them from obtaining legal recognition. Without legal identity, they cannot access government welfare schemes or feel secure. The absence of identification papers obstructs their access to education, employment, and healthcare services.

5. **Mental and Physical Health Issues:** Displacement, separation from family, and uncertainty in a new place severely impact their mental health. Unsanitary living conditions and inadequate healthcare make them vulnerable to diseases.
6. **Lack of Education:** Refugee children often lack access to education, which leaves their future uncertain. Without education, their ability to contribute to society is severely limited.

7. **Political Instability and Security Concerns:** In many countries, refugees face political disputes and violence. They live in fear of harassment by security forces or local groups. The trauma of displacement, separation from their homeland, and concerns about safety and stability in a new place further compound their challenges. Refugees represent a segment of humanity that is often overlooked. Solving their problems is not only a humanitarian duty but also essential for global stability. Integrating refugees into the mainstream is our moral and social responsibility.

Elderly: Individuals aged 60 years or above are considered senior citizens. As physical activity declines with age, their vulnerability increases. Their rights are often violated at family, societal, and other levels. Elderly individuals, especially those who are economically weak, isolated, or lack social security, often face neglect and exploitation. Marginalized elderly people are those who are excluded socially, economically, and emotionally. In their old age, elderly individuals often become isolated from the mainstream of society. Their problems are multifaceted, adversely affecting their health, mental state, and standard of living. Marginalized elderly people are those who have been cut off from the mainstream of society and face neglect, loneliness, and deprivation. These issues may be social, economic, or health-related. Despite having the right to a dignified life in old age, many elderly individuals suffer from poverty, mental stress, and a lack of physical security.

Major Problems Faced by the Elderly:

1. **Economic Problems:** Lack of a stable source of income. Unavailability of pensions and other financial schemes. Insufficient funds to meet medical and other needs in old age. Absence of pension or steady income after retirement. Dependence on children or family, leading to a loss of self-reliance and dignity. Lack of money for health-related expenses. Frequent economic exploitation by other family members.
2. **Health Problems:** Age-related illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, and joint pain. Limited access to medical services. Mental health issues such as depression and loneliness. Diseases like hypertension, diabetes, heart ailments, and arthritis. Loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Unavailability of

healthcare services, especially in rural areas. Lack of proper care within the family.

3. **Social Neglect:** Neglect by family members. Lack of opportunities to contribute to society. Absence of social engagement and respect. Being abandoned by children or placed in old age homes. Often viewed as unproductive or burdensome. Their experience and knowledge are not valued or respected.
4. **Emotional and Mental Issues:** Loneliness and isolation. Mental stress due to distance from children and family. Loss of self-esteem, leading to feelings of uselessness. Being viewed as a burden by family and society. Lack of emotional support and communication from family and friends.
5. **Lack of Physical Security:** Facing violence, exploitation, or property disputes in old age. Lack of safe and secure housing. Property disputes and conflicts within the family over inheritance. Experiences of violence and exploitation, whether physical, mental, or economic. Many elderly individuals become homeless or live in unsafe conditions due to housing problems.

Tribal People: Tribal people are social communities that existed before the development of modern states. They possess a distinct and unique culture that requires preservation. However, due to exploitation by capitalist classes and the apathy of the state, these communities are pushed to the margins and fall into the category of neglected and marginalized groups. In India, tribal communities (Scheduled Tribes) are among the most marginalized groups. These communities are reservoirs of ancient traditions, culture, and knowledge, but in modern society, they face neglect, discrimination, and exploitation. Tribal communities are an integral part of India, known for their unique cultural, social, and economic practices. However, they are often excluded from development and mainstream activities, pushing them to the margins. Their problems are multifaceted and primarily related to land, livelihood, education, health, and socio-political discrimination. Their challenges can be observed at multiple levels:

1. **Land and Livelihood Issues:** Loss of land due to industrial projects, mining, and deforestation. Tribals dependent on forests are often deprived of their means of livelihood.

Traditional occupations such as farming, hunting, and fishing have weakened. Large-scale displacement due to development projects. Seizure of tribal lands for mining, industrial projects, and development works. Denial of rights to forest-dependent tribals. Traditional livelihoods, such as agriculture, hunting, and fishing, are becoming less viable.

2. **Educational Backwardness:** Lack of schools in tribal areas. Limited access to education in tribal regions. Absence of education in local languages hinders children's progress. Poverty forces children to drop out of school and take up labour work. Girls face additional barriers to education. Education is often provided in non-tribal languages, creating difficulties for tribal children. Gender inequality reduces educational opportunities for girls.
3. **Lack of Healthcare Services:** Absence of hospitals, doctors, and medicines in tribal areas. Malnutrition caused by poverty and a lack of resources. Neglect of traditional knowledge: tribal medicinal practices are often dismissed. Tribal women face severe challenges related to pregnancy and menstruation due to the lack of healthcare. Tribal communities face severe hardships, and addressing their issues requires focused efforts to ensure their inclusion in mainstream society while respecting their unique identity and culture.

Challenges Faced by Tribal Communities:

1. **Health Issues:** Lack of health centres and medical facilities. Widespread malnutrition due to poverty and lack of resources. Problems related to pregnancy and menstruation. Neglect of traditional tribal medicinal practices and their preservation.
2. **Economic Inequality:** High poverty rates in tribal areas. Lack of basic infrastructure such as electricity, water, and roads. Discrimination in wages and economic exploitation by contractors. Tribals often face economic and labour exploitation by contractors and outsiders. Absence of basic amenities like water, electricity, and transportation.
3. **Social Discrimination and Neglect:** Tribal people are considered to hold a lower status in society. Their traditions and languages are not recognized or given importance in the mainstream. Tribals are excluded from the main social

structure. Tribal languages, traditions, and customs are not valued in the mainstream. Tribals face caste-based and cultural discrimination. Their religious and cultural sites are often destroyed.

4. **Political Neglect:** Limited participation of tribal communities in political decision-making. Government programs designed for tribals are not implemented effectively. The rights of tribals are often overlooked in Favor of corporations and large industries. Lack of representation.Tribals have minimal participation in political and administrative decisions. Laws and schemes meant for tribal welfare are not enforced effectively. Many tribal regions come under the influence of Naxalism , which disrupts their lives and development.

LGBTQ+ Community: Due to their differing sexual orientations and unique gender identities, members of the LGBTQ+ community often face social disdain and neglect. As a result, their structural participation in society diminishes. The LGBTQ+ community, which includes lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender individuals, and other sexual and gender minorities, is often among the most marginalized groups in society. Their challenges span social, legal, mental health, and economic spheres. A lack of acceptance in mainstream society and patriarchal, conservative attitudes contribute to the discrimination and exploitation they face.

Key Issues Faced by the LGBTQ+ Community:

1. Social Rejection and Discrimination: Many LGBTQ+ individuals are rejected by their families. They are often stigmatized and considered "different" by society. Cultural traditions and beliefs frequently deny acceptance to LGBTQ+ individuals. Rigid gender norms: Criticism and discrimination for not conforming to traditional male and female roles.

2. Legal and Political Problems:

Lack of Legal Rights: While homosexuality has been legalized in many countries, rights related to marriage, property, and adoption remain limited. Transgender individuals face challenges in legally changing their gender identity. There is insufficient legal protection against discrimination and violence.

3. **Physical and Sexual Violence:** Experience of violence within their own families. Particularly affects transgender individuals

and gay men. Inhumane and psychologically traumatic "corrective" treatments aimed at changing their orientation or identity.

4. **Employment Discrimination:** LGBTQ+ individuals face rejection in workplaces due to their gender identity or sexual orientation. Lack of financial independence after being disowned by their families.

Discrimination and bullying in schools and colleges often lead to dropout rates, impacting education and career prospects.

5. Health Issues: LGBTQ+ individuals are often stereotypically associated with HIV/AIDS, leading to stigma. Lack of sensitivity among medical professionals toward their unique healthcare needs. Unavailability of services for hormonal and surgical transition for transgender individuals. The LGBTQ+ community's struggles are deeply intertwined with societal attitudes, legal systems, and institutional practices. Addressing these challenges requires societal awareness, legal reforms, and inclusive healthcare and employment policies to ensure dignity and equality for all.

Women involved in Prostitution: Women involved in prostitution are often victims of social exploitation. In the absence of adequate laws and regulations, this group is neglected, marginalized, and part of an insecure community. Women in prostitution are among the most marginalized sections of society. They often engage in this work due to poverty, social inequality, and exploitation. In this situation, they face physical, mental, social, and legal challenges. The mainstream society considers them immoral and unacceptable, further complicating their problems. The major issues faced by women involved in prostitution are as follows:

1. **Social Exclusion and Stigma:** Rejection by family and society. Considered morally degraded and "unacceptable" by society. Lack of respect and acceptance in mainstream society.
2. **Economic Problems:** Dependency on agents and intermediaries. Lack of economic alternatives to exit prostitution. Unstable and inadequate income.
3. **Health Issues:** High risk of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Lack of proper healthcare services during pregnancy and childbirth. Dependence on substances to cope with stress.

4. **Physical and Sexual Exploitation:** Physical and sexual violence from clients, agents, and even the police. Often forced into prostitution. Sexual exploitation of minors or young girls.
5. **Legal Problems:** In many countries, prostitution is partially legal or entirely illegal, leaving women without legal protection. Lack of justice against exploitation; discrimination within the police and judicial system. Women involved in prostitution are often criminalized.
6. **Lack of Social Security:** Absence of better opportunities for their children and themselves. Lack of safe and stable housing. Scarcity of livelihood options after exiting prostitution.

HIV Positive/AIDS-Infected Individuals: HIV-infected individuals face social exclusion worldwide. This disease has a particularly adverse impact on children, as society often deprives them of their basic right to education. People living with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immuno deficiency Syndrome) are forced to live on the margins of society. They not only deal with physical challenges but also face social, mental, and economic problems. Misconceptions and stigma in society further worsen their plight. The key challenges faced by HIV-positive / AIDS-infected individuals include:

1. **Social Discrimination and Stigma:** Rejection by family and society. Discrimination at workplaces, schools, and public spaces. HIV / AIDS is wrongly associated with "immorality" or "misconduct."
2. **Health Issues:** Weakening of the immune system, leading to vulnerability to other diseases. Necessity of adhering to regular antiretroviral therapy (ART). Lack of access to medicines and healthcare services, especially in rural areas. Side effects of ART drugs, such as weakness, fatigue, and mental health issues.
3. **Mental Health:** Decline in self-esteem due to the infection. Feelings of isolation and detachment from society and family. Mental stress leading to suicidal tendencies.
4. **Economic Problems:** Denial of employment opportunities for HIV-positive individuals. Financial burden due to the high cost of treatment. Limited job opportunities caused by treatment needs and discrimination.

5. **Barriers to Education:** HIV-infected children face discrimination in schools. These children and their families are often excluded from school and community activities.
6. **Special Challenges for Women and Children:** Exploitation and sexual violence against women. Lack of proper medical care for HIV-infected pregnant women. Disrupted upbringing of children born to infected parents.
7. **Legal Problems:** Lack of legal awareness and knowledge about their rights among HIV-positive individuals. Discrimination in legal processes and by law enforcement agencies.

Nomadic or Wandering Communities: Nomadic tribes are communities that lack a permanent occupation or means of stable livelihood. They move from one place to another in search of survival, making it extremely difficult for them to claim their rights. These groups have traditionally engaged in activities such as hunting, animal husbandry, agriculture, handicrafts, or music. However, modern development, industrialization, and governmental policies have marginalized them. Preserving their traditional way of life and integrating them into mainstream society is a significant challenge today.

Key Issues Faced by Nomadic Communities:

1. **Housing and Land Rights:** They lack permanent homes or land, leading to the constant fear of eviction.Their traditional grazing and agricultural lands have often been taken over by the government. Without legal documents, they are labelled as "illegal occupants."
2. **Livelihood Crisis:** The decline of traditional occupations such as hunting, herding, and handicrafts has left them without stable income sources. The new economy has no place for their traditional roles. They do not have consistent means of earning a living.
3. **Lack of Education:** Frequent relocation prevents children from attending school. Nomadic children face discrimination and isolation in schools. There is a lack of awareness about education within the community.
4. **Health Challenges:** Their migratory lifestyle limits access to healthcare services. Low income and resources result in malnutrition issues. Women and children face significant health risks, including pregnancy, childbirth, and diseases in children.

5. **Social Exclusion:** The mainstream society views them as "outsiders" or anti-social. Many nomadic communities face caste-based discrimination and are categorized as lower castes. They are often stereotyped as criminals or involved in illegal activities.
6. **Political and Legal Issues:** They lack identification documents such as voter ID, ration cards, or Aadhaar cards. These communities have little to no political representation and are excluded from decision-making processes. Without a permanent address, they cannot access government benefits and welfare schemes.
7. **Cultural and Identity Crisis:** Loss of traditional knowledge has led to the decline of their art, music, and crafts. Their customs and lifestyles are considered irrelevant in modern society.

Other Marginalized and Vulnerable Groups: In addition to nomadic tribes, there are other groups in society that remain insecure, neglected, and marginalized. These include manual scavengers, garbage collectors, slum dwellers, sanitation workers, single parents, refugees imprisoned in Indian jails, and rehabilitated ex-convicts.

Structural Discrimination Faced by Vulnerable, Marginalized, and Neglected Groups: Marginalized groups often suffer from systemic discrimination, resulting in deprivation of fundamental rights and resources. Some common forms of structural discrimination include:

i) Lack of employment opportunities, ii)Inadequate access to education, iii)Exclusion from national resources, iv)Food insecurity, v)Persistent poverty, vi)Violations of human rights. vii)Absence of social security, viii)Poor access to nutritious food and healthcare.

Meaning and Types of Inequality: In social sciences, inequality is often categorized into two primary dimensions:

Social Inequality: This refers to discrimination based on caste, religion, gender, and class. Social inequality arises from the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and rights among people based on caste, religion, gender, and other societal factors. It creates barriers to progress and development

Economic Inequality: This indicates the unequal distribution of income, wealth, and resources among individuals and groups.

Key Causes of Social Inequality:

1. **Economic Disparity:** Unequal distribution of economic resources is a primary driver of social inequality. A small portion of the population holds excessive wealth and resources, while a majority lives in poverty. The concentration of wealth widens the gap between the rich and the poor.
2. **Caste System:** In India, the caste system is a significant cause of social inequality. People are classified by birth, leading to discrimination against lower castes in education, employment, and social status.
3. **Gender Inequality:** Resources and rights are distributed unequally between men and women. Women are often denied access to education, employment, and property rights. Patriarchal mindsets exacerbate this inequality.
4. **Educational Disparity:** Unequal access to quality education perpetuates social inequality. People in rural areas and lower economic classes are often denied good educational opportunities. Quality education remains accessible primarily to affluent classes.
5. **Religious Discrimination:** Prejudice and discrimination between different religious communities' fuel inequality. Minority communities often struggle for equal opportunities and recognition in mainstream society.
6. **Regional Inequality:** Unequal development and distribution of resources between urban and rural areas create regional disparities. Urban areas offer better education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, while rural areas lack even basic facilities.
7. **Political Discrimination:** Marginalized groups have limited participation in political processes. Power and resources are controlled by a select few, increasing inequality.
8. **Cultural and Social Prejudices:** Conservative traditions and beliefs, such as dowry, child marriage, and religious extremism, deepen social inequality. These practices exploit weaker sections, especially women.
9. **Globalization and Modernization:** Globalization has widened the gap between wealthy and impoverished nations. Only

affluent classes benefit from modern technology and opportunities, leaving underprivileged groups further behind.

10. **Failure of Government Policies:** Policies aimed at ensuring equality and justice often fail in implementation. Corruption and resource mismanagement prevent marginalized groups from accessing developmental benefits.
11. **Addressing Social Inequality:** To reduce inequality, the following steps are essential, Promoting education and awareness among all sections of society. Implementing economic reforms to ensure equitable distribution of resources. Encouraging gender equality and empowering women. Eliminating caste and religious discrimination. Ensuring that government schemes are effectively implemented and reach marginalized groups.By addressing these causes and implementing inclusive policies, a progressive and prosperous society can be built where equality prevails.

Economic Inequality: Overview and Solutions:

Definition of Economic Inequality: Economic inequality refers to the unequal distribution of wealth, income, and resources within a society. It arises when economic benefits, opportunities, and resources are divided disproportionately among different classes or individuals. Economic inequality impacts individuals, families, and communities and contributes to social, political, and cultural challenges.

Types of Economic Inequality:

1. **Income Inequality:** Refers to disparities in earnings, where some individuals earn significantly higher incomes, while others struggle with low wages or even less.
2. **Wealth Inequality:** Some individuals or families possess vast assets, such as land, homes, and investments, while others lack basic resources.
3. **Regional Inequality:** Urban areas typically enjoy better opportunities and facilities compared to rural areas, leading to developmental disparities.
4. **Gender Inequality:** Differences in access to income and economic resources between men and women also represent economic inequality.

5. **Impact of Economic Inequality:** Economic inequality influences various aspects of society, including access to education, healthcare, employment, and overall quality of life. It creates a wide gap between the rich and the poor, intensifying social divisions and reducing opportunities for marginalized groups.

Solutions to Address Inequality-

1. **Provision of Quality Education:** Equal access to education is critical for reducing inequality. Free and quality education should be ensured for children from poor and marginalized communities. Special attention should be given to the education of girls to address gender inequality.
2. **Economic Reforms and Employment Generation:** Governments should implement schemes to create jobs and provide stable incomes for underprivileged groups. Initiatives like micro-loans and skill development programs can encourage self-employment. Workers in the unorganized sector must receive fair wages and social security.
3. **Eradicating Caste-Based Discrimination:** Caste-based reservation and affirmative action policies should be effectively implemented. Awareness campaigns can help eliminate caste discrimination and promote social harmony.
4. **Promoting Gender Equality:** Women should be provided equal opportunities, fair wages, and property rights. Strict laws must be enforced to combat gender discrimination and violence. Programs should enhance women's participation in education and employment.
5. **Equal Access to Healthcare:** Affordable and accessible healthcare services should be provided to all communities. Healthcare infrastructure, including hospitals and medicines, must be strengthened in rural and remote areas. Nutrition and sanitation programs should be implemented to address health inequalities.
6. **Fostering Religious and Cultural Harmony:** Promote tolerance and unity through social initiatives to eliminate religious discrimination. Equal opportunities and rights should be granted to people of all faiths. Programs celebrating cultural diversity should be encouraged.

7. **Effective Implementation of Government Policies:** Anti-poverty schemes and social security programs must be implemented transparently. Corruption should be curbed to ensure direct benefits to target beneficiaries. Marginalized groups must be actively involved in development initiatives.
8. **Reducing Regional Disparities:** Basic infrastructure like roads, electricity, water, and internet should be made available in rural areas. Industrial development and employment opportunities should be promoted in backward regions. Policies should aim for balanced regional development.
9. **Awareness and Social Movements:** Spread awareness about the importance of equality and justice. Community organizations and NGOs should play an active role in advocacy. Campaigns and movements should address inequality and encourage collective action.
10. **Managing Globalization Effects:** Address the widening gap caused by globalization with targeted policies. Support small and medium enterprises to ensure their survival and growth. Promote digital education and skill development to enable all sections of society to benefit from globalization.
11. **Legal Reforms and Justice Systems:** Strictly enforce laws to address discrimination and exploitation. Ensure that laws promoting equality are implemented effectively.

Conclusion:

Addressing economic inequality requires a holistic and collaborative approach involving governments, communities, and individuals. Equal access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare, and resources must be ensured. Positive and inclusive policies, coupled with collective efforts, can create a just and equitable society. Economic inequality is not just a social and economic challenge but also a major obstacle to justice, equality, and human rights. Its eradication is essential for sustainable development and the overall progress of society.

References:

1. Srinivas, M.N. (1998); *'Social Change in Modern India'*, Rajkamal Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
2. Kishore, Raj (2000); *'Harijan to Dalit'*, Vani Prakashan, New Delhi.

3. Kishore, Raj (1994); *'India's Political Crisis'*, Vani Prakashan, New Delhi.
4. *National Curriculum Framework 2000*, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
5. Madhumita Bandopadhyay (2006), *'Education of Marginalized Groups in India: From the Perspective of Social Justice'*.
6. Sad Gopal, Anil (2006); *'Education, Equality, and India's Sovereignty', Volume-8, Issue-5.*
7. *Reproductive and Child Health* (2006), *District Level Household Survey*, International Institute for Population Sciences, 2002-04, Mumbai, India.
8. Mishra, Manasee (2006): *"Gendered Vulnerabilities: Women's Health and Access to Healthcare in India"*, The Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT), India (Mumbai).
9. Babu, B.V., Kusuma, Y.S. (2007): *"Tribal Health Problems: Some Social Science Perspectives"*, in Mohammad Akram (ed.), *Health Dynamics and Marginalized Communities*, Rawat Publication, India.
10. Debal K. Singha Roy (ed.) (2001): *'Social Development and the Empowerment of Marginalized Groups: Perspectives and Strategies'*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.
11. Mohanty, Manoranjan (2001): *"On the Concept of Empowerment"*, in Debal K. Singha Roy (ed.), *Social Development and the Empowerment of Marginalized Groups: Perspectives and Strategies*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

41

Pivot to Modernity, Women's Education and Emergence of Women Medics in Colonial Bengal

Mithun Biswas

Abstract

The development of women's medical education and healthcare in colonial Bengal was intricately linked to the social, cultural, and colonial dynamics of the time. Under British rule, both Bengali and Indian society grappled with issues of gender discrimination, casteism, and the colonial imposition on indigenous medical practices. The British colonial government's approach to these issues, particularly regarding women's health, can be traced through initiatives like the allocation of funds for health services. One of the most significant initiatives was the establishment of the Dufferin Fund, officially known as the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, sought to address the medical needs of purdah-nashin (secluded) women, who were traditionally denied access to male doctors due to strict gender norms. By providing resources for the training of female doctors, the Fund sought to empower women within the medical profession and create an accessible healthcare infrastructure for women in colonial Bengal. While the Fund's formation was a step toward improving women's healthcare, it was also a contested one, as it both reflected colonial priorities and provided a space for Indian reformers to advocate for women's rights and education. Despite significant resistance from conservative social norms and religious dogma, women such as Kadambini Ganguly and Haimavati Sen became pioneers in the medical field, earning medical degrees and challenging both colonial and patriarchal structures. This study analyzes the pivotal role of the Dufferin Fund in promoting female medical education and the subsequent professionalization of women in healthcare. Drawing on feminist theory and the autobiographies of pioneering female doctors, this paper critically examines

the challenges these women faced in attaining medical education and recognition in a male-dominated colonial medical system. The aim of this article is to shed light on the development of women's education particularly in the field of medical science in the nineteenth century special reference to colonial Bengal, and the attitude of Bengalis towards Western medical education. Ultimately, it offers a nuanced analysis of how colonialism, gender, and medical education intersected to shape the healthcare landscape for women in colonial Bengal.

Keywords: *medical education, healthcare, indigenous medical practices, purdah-nashin (secluded), Dufferin Fund, colonialism, patriarchal, Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, gender*

Introduction:

The modern education system and women's question became a part of the greater discourse of progress and modernity in nineteenth century colonial Bengal and a movement for female education started as part of the 'colonised males' search for the 'new woman' (Forbes, 2008). In the early nineteenth century, there were strong prejudices against women's education. William Adam recorded in his Report on the State of Education In Bengal for 1836 that female education not only produced widows, but also facilitated romantic intrigue. (Adam, 1836) It was said that no man would marry an educated girl. (Adam, 1836) So female education was blamed because of the lurking male fear of losing their control over their an educated wives, that was therefore a form of insecurity of the dominating class. Beside that the domestic role of women fostered a belief that education for girls could not put to any financial goal. The missionaries took up the cause of educating women, as a way of enlightening indigenous women but their main purpose was proselytization. In nineteenth century, social reformers were moved by the most pitiable conditions of women in society and felt that Indian society could not develop unless the conditions of the women improved. Some *bhadralok* educated social reformers who were by and large men, took up the cause of women's education and worked towards its proliferation for women's amelioration. They believed that the education of women was necessary to achieve any reform, not only in the condition of women but in the state of society at large.

Colonial Modernity, Contribution of Social Reformers for women's amelioration

In British India, the foreign rulers had also focused their attention on 'how can women be modernized?'. Enamoured with their civilising

mission, 'influential British writers condemned Indian religion, culture and society for their rules and customs regarding women'. (Forbes, 2008) Western observers, like James Mill, figured out the women's question as a discourse to degrade India's status and constructed a view point that critique the civilisation of India into inferior status in the hierarchy of civilisations. Indigenous reformers or crusader in the dominant Hindu society like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar, etc. had responded to the changing context and make attempts to reform women's condition by bringing educational, social and health reforms. It has to be clear that Indian reformers supported female education not just because an improvement of women's condition and a programme of social reform, there developed an assertion of Indian identity, it's glorious past where women held a high position in society along with an emphasis on women's traditional qualities. So therefore, it is no wonder that the status of women became the main focus of the reforming agenda of the modernising Indian intellectuals. Social reformers fought against the system of sati (women's cremation with her dead husband) purdah (veil) and child marriage. They also supported widow remarriage. Female education received special encouragement. But none of the social reformers challenged the male domination of the patriarchal system. Rather, it could be said that the movement launched by them was to make the patriarchal system a bit humane. (Saxena, 1994)

Education of Women in Colonial Bengal

Three groups of people i.e. the British, Indian male reformers and educated Indian women laid the role for the spread of female education. The initiative was taken in Calcutta by men like Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Radhakanta Deb and the School Book Society and later on by Keshab Chandra Sen and the Brahmo Samaj, in Western India by Madhav Govind Ranade and Prarthana Samaj, in North India by Dayanand and his Arya Samaj and in Madras by Annie Besant and the Theosophical Society. So far as the issue of Indian educated women was concerned, we should mention the endeavours of Pandita Ramabai in Western India, Sister Subbalakshmi in Madras and Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain among the Muslim women in Bengal. (Bandyopadhyay, 2004) The Indian Education (Hunter) Commission recommended that 'female education be treated as a legitimate charge alike on local, municipal and on provincial Funds, and receive special encouragement.' The Brahmo Samaj, a reformist sect whose

membership was largely drawn from the Hindu upper castes, took the lead in advocating reforms to improve the status of women in Bengali society. They favoured elementary and higher education for women, widow remarriage, inter-caste marriage and participation of women in social and public life.

Bamabodhini Patrika and Women's education

In the latter half of nineteenth century, a new age construction womanhood projected, where woman had been highlighted as good wife and mother, simply garnished by education and some Victorian womanly ideals borrowed from the West, that was projected as 'ideal' for the 'good' Indian woman. *Bamabodhini Patrika*, the journal for women's enlightenment, constitute an historical capsule of the reformist agenda for women in Bengal. It published in Bengal by the enlightened and educated Brahmos, propagated such a model.(Ray & Basu, 1999) In this Patrika in (1311 B.S.) 1904 AD wrote,

The wife, who like Goddess Lakshmi worships her husband as if he is a God Hari, will go to heaven after her death and will taste every happiness along with her husband just as God and Goddess, Hari and Lakshmi, enjoy eternal happiness.' (Ray & Basu, 1999)

In this context, it has been assumed that there is a social utility behind the expansion of women's education, namely the expected constructive role women play in the moral and social well-being of family members. The *Bhadramahila* ideal had taken shape according to the particular reform ideology of the Brahmos, was eventually adopted by a widening circle of women in *bhadralok* families. (Meredith, 1984) According to Borthwick, as representatives of a successful westernizing elite, able to communicate in the same social idiom as their British rulers, the Brahmo *Bhadramahila* provided an attainable ideal for other women. The stereotype was created to suit the purposes of an elite under colonial rule, combining the self-sacrificing virtues of the ideal Hindu women with the Victorian women's ability to cooperate in the furtherance of her husband's career. (Meredith, 1984) In addition, for instance, the *Strisiksa Bidhayak* (Prescriptions for Women's Education), written in 1822, was published by the "Female Juvenile Society" for the establishment and support of Bengalee female school, displayed itself as a touchstone to prove women's capacities throughout the century. The *Strisiksa Bidhayak* enumerated the advantages of female education as including the ability to correspond with an absent husband, or to do household accounts. With a

knowledge of hygiene, women could raise healthier children. (Meredith, 1984, pp. 63-64) Many upper caste Hindu parents had come to believe that some education for daughters was desirable and would enhance rather than destroy their marital prospects. (Southard, 1993) The argument is that education was necessary for the creation of an enlightened mother.

For propagating the women's education, Bamabodhini Sabha [Society for the Enlightenment of Women] prepared a blueprint for *antahpur* school to facilitate educational opportunities for older women within the home. In April 1866, they issued a outlined a five-year syllabus for home study, covering variety of subjects, with recommended textbooks and topics for examination for every year. They formulated an academic curriculum where moral Science, embroidery, and handicrafts, literature, geography, history algebra and hygiene, botany and biology would be taught. The May 1870, *Bamabodhini Patrika* issue printed two prize-winning answer scripts from the fourth-year examinations by Deentarini Mukhopadhyay and Dakshayani Ghosh. The award-winning scripts were published by *Bamabodhini* in a separate volume entitled Narishiksha or Women's Education. (Sen, 2004)

The number of girls' elementary and secondary schools in Bengal increased rapidly after 1870s. Keshav Chandra Sen, whose views were in stark contrast to those of the radical Brahmins, who wanted women to have equal opportunities in education as the male members of society. Miss Annette Ackroyd, who came to Calcutta in 1872, opened a school called Hindu Mahila Vidyalaya in September 1873, a radical Brahmos, Dwarkanath Ganguly, became its headmaster, which aimed to spread education to women with more equal importance. With the active backing of liberal Brahmos including, Anandamohan Bose, Durgamohan Das, Shibnath Shastri also supported such a move. They formed an organisation called the 'Samadarshi Party' and started a newspaper of the same name. With the help of the Samadarshi Party, the Banga Mahila Vidyalaya was established in June 1876, it was the first institution to offer women a college curriculum. In 1878, it merged with the Bethune School [now Bethune College] to become the leading women's higher education institution in Bengal. Its first few students, mostly women from Brahmin families, included Durga Mohan Das' daughters, Sarala and Abla, Jagadish Chandra Bose's sister, Swarna Prabha, Manmohan Ghosh's sister Binodini, and Brajkishore Bose's daughter Kadambini Bose. Kadambini Bose and Chandramukhi Bose,

a Christian, graduated from Bethune College in 1882. They were the first women graduates in the entire British Empire. Higher education institutions for girls were dominated by Brahmos and Indian Christians in the nineteenth century, while Muslim attendance was not significant. (Southard, 1993)

Role of Bengali women in women's education

In the early twentieth century, Bengali women began to assume leadership roles in the movements for educational and social reform. Lady Abala Bose, daughter of the Brahmo reformer Durga Mohan Das, became the director of the Brahmo Girls School which was acclaimed as the best girls' school in the province. She founded the Nari Shiksha Samiti (Women's Educational Association) and a widow's home to improve the conditions of women. (Southard, 1993) Another distinct lady, Saroj Nalini Dutt, wife of an Indian district officer, articulated social awareness program included health and hygiene classes, child welfare clinics, arts and crafts, and girls' schools for the uplift of women in the rural, by organizing Mahila Samitis in the areas where her husband was posted.

Women in Medical Education in Colonial Bengal

Social reform movements had to the kin attainment to reconcile the ideas from the West with the indigenous cultural practices of the society. This was a process of restructuring, that touched upon intimate arenas of domesticity, conjugality, child-bearing and child-rearing. Lady missionaries undertook campaigns to transform indigenous women according to their model into "good mothers and wives" by educating them in hygiene, sanitation, nutrition, and maternity. In the process, rationality became the cornerstone of elitist middle-class discourse that derived sustenance from values and ideals upheld by the colonial state. (Naono, 2012)The growing concern for the health and well-being of women in India from around the middle of the nineteenth century prompted the need for women medical professionals in colonial India. According to James Mill the Hindus had 'habitual contempt' for their women. Most Anglo-Indian discourses written in the second half of the 19th century focused critically on the condition of Indian women, especially the zenanas, which were residences for women from upper-class Hindu and Muslim families. Zenana was considered to be a place of dirt, darkness and disease. (Nair, 1990)

It is believed that the status of Indian women in the medical profession began to change in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Two main factors were responsible for the onset of this change. One was at the inward level, where society was gradually changing due to the rise of political consciousness, modern education, the spread of science and technology, the spread of cultural awareness, changing economic conditions and widespread social awakening. All these created a situation where women felt anxious about their position in society, especially their role and status within and outside the family. The other was, at the outward level, where outside or foreign cultural influences were taking hold. (Bhadra, 2011)

Educating Lady Doctor in colonial Bengal

In the Victorian period, the women's movement and the institutions it generated-suffrage societies, the repeal campaign, and the feminist periodical press in all its variety-intersected with and helped to support several corporate bodies expressly devote to the question of women's medical work for India. (Burton, 1996) When the British colonial rulers opened their hospitals in India, the presence of women was almost negligible in many parts of India due to the seclusion of women. There were no women on the hospital staff, so women would express their annoyance at being treated by men and stay away from the hospitals. The lack of medical care and the high infant mortality rate meant that women in captivity had no choice but to suffer the pitiful plight of women. So many women missionaries decided to do something to alleviate this suffering. They introduced hospital nurses to Indian households and persuaded Indian women to go to hospitals for deliveries, and they participated in public life and social service activities. In this context, some private organizations in British India expressed concern for the health of the Indian indigenous female population of the empire. The Kittredge Fund (established in 1882) and the Dufferin Fund (established in 1885) were both meant to provide zenana medical care for Indian women. Dufferin Fund (established in 1885) as the National Association came to be called, was the first systematic attempt to extend Western medicine to Indian women. The Dufferin Fund's formation, however, was attributed to Queen Victoria's personal initiative. Lord Dufferin was specifically appointed as Viceroy because some of the decisions of his predecessor, the liberal reformist Lord Ripon, were intended to repair the damage done to Britain. Ripon had sponsored the ill-fated Ilbert Bill, which proposed allowing certain classes of European defendants

to be trial before Indian magistrates. But Ripon later withdrew the bill in the face of general outrage among the European public, much to the dismay of Indian nationalists.

The Dufferin Fund is generally recognized as the first initiative launched to coordinate the flow of medical women to India. Also referred to as the *National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India,* the fund was organized by Harriot Dufferin, vicereine of India. (Burton A. , 1996) Jex-Blake's *Medical Women: A Thesis and its History* (1886), suggests that commitment to the imperial mission in India was part of the earliest schemes for promoting women's medical education in Britain. Jex-Blake made history when, along with seven other women, she sued Edinburgh University over its exclusion of female students pursuing medical degrees in 1872. On March 2nd, 1874, was held the last great meeting of the Committee for Medical Education of Women in Edinburgh, to consider the position of affairs consequent on the decision of the Court of Session and the termination of our studies in Edinburgh. Jex-Blake's explained in her book, how an Indian man, the Reverend Narayaa Sheshadri, stood up and testified to the need for women medical practitioners in India. He said that-

" He never thought that in the nineteenth century there could be any people who would throw obstacles in the way of female education, in this country at least. . . . He knew that lady doctors would be hailed in his country as a great blessing, for there were innumerable females whom no male doctor was allowed to see. He knew a doctor who was asked to prescribe for a Mahometan lady, and was only allowed to examine her tongue through a hole cut in her veil. . . . Among high caste ladies the symptoms of a disease had to be learned more from the description of some male relative than from the patients themselves. (Jex-Blake, 1886)

Sheshadri asserted that there were "innumerable females," "whom no male doctor was allowed to see" because of their seclusion in the zenana.' (Jex-Blake, 1886)

The National Indian Association (NIA) was founded in 1870 after Mary Carpenter's visit to India. From the outset, it was dedicated to promoting women's education. In November 1882, a London conference organised by the NIA declared that women's medical care would be provided to women in India. This conference saw the first public call for women doctors in India, as well as an offer of funding

for the entry of English European women into India. At this conference, Dr. Hoggan argued for the need for women doctors, especially for the treatment of Zenana patients. Dr. Hoggan was not only in favour of the arrival of individual women doctors or even of a combined body of medical practitioners, but also for the establishment of a comprehensive women's medical service in India. For his part, Blackwell was encouraged by the professional opportunities that would arise from the demand for medical care for Zenana women, although he was also concerned about the significant difficulties that women doctors would face in India. He also noted that in an imperial context, female doctors would have greater responsibilities. The proper clinical training of midwives was also of great concern to her, and she urged the establishment of "a well-organized School of Midwifery with Sanitary Science attached for the training of native women.' (Burton A. , 1996)

The main objective of the Dufferin Fund was "to provide medical knowledge and comfort to the women of India by providing female health care workers". The main rationale behind the establishment of the Fund was the belief that Indian women refused to see male doctors or were not allowed to seek their advice by their family members, even in life-threatening situations. As Dr. B. N. Banerjee reported to those present at the first meeting of the North-West Province and Ayodhya branches of the Fund. He asserted that "As a medical man practising among the people of these Provinces, I know better than many of you of the practical difficulty of treating successfully the *pardah nashin* women. (Lal, 1994) The National Association's Prospectus promised to accomplish this aim by supporting three areas: (1) medical tuition, including the teaching and training of women as physicians, hospital assistants, nurses, and midwives, the education to be supplied first by England and America but then by India; (2) medical relief, which included establishing under female superintendence dispensaries and cottage hospitals for the treatment of women and children, opening female wards under female supervision in existing hospitals and dispensaries, providing female medical officers and attendants for existing female wards, and founding hospitals for women where funds were forthcoming; and (3) provision of trained female nurses and midwives to care for women and children in hospitals and private house. (Lal, 1994) In March 1883, George Kittredge, an American businessman based in Bombay, initiated a fund specifically aimed at ensuring the training of women doctors to provide medical care for women in India.

In Bengal, since the mid-1870s, a group of educated reformers began advocating for women's admission to Medical Colleges. The idea of introducing medical training for women, at first glance, seemed unusual and contrary to the prevailing attitudes toward women's education among reformers. While women from aristocratic families were sometimes given primary and secondary education to manage property in case of an untimely death of husband, societal norms at that time, at large, were conservative and discouraged the education of women. Those women who sought education had to overcome enormous difficulties in their life. According to Geraldine Forbes, the term "elite" has unfortunately been used to categorize and dismiss women who struggled to become literate. For example, Anandibai Joshi, an Indian woman who was married off at the age of nine, lived a challenging life despite facing a lot of deprivation, abuse and social exclusion. Despite these hardships, she eventually migrated to America and studied at the Philadelphia Women's Medical College, becoming India's first foreign-trained doctor.

In the male-dominated medical profession, women began to receive medical education in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the Calcutta Medical College was more resistant to the admission of women to medicine. In 1882, Miss Elle D'Abreau and Miss Abala Das (later the wife of Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose) applied for admission to the Calcutta Medical College and were rejected on the grounds that they had passed only the First Arts examination, not the Bachelor of Arts examination. Both were sent to the Madras Medical School where they studied for a certificate degree.

The Medical College Council and the Calcutta Medical Faculty opposed the opening of medical training to women. They argued that enlisted women doctors would appear semi-educated and would tarnish the sanctity of the medical profession. Not agreeing with this, some of the educated men of the upper classes in India sent their own daughters to study medicine. They built a strong movement within the government to open the Calcutta Medical College to women. In 1880, Calcutta Medical College opened its doors to women. In 1886, Dr. Kadambini Bose was awarded the GBMC (Bachelor of Bengal Medical College) degree, which gave her the right to practice Western medicine. As a reformer, Kadambini Bose overcame many obstacles, overcoming strong opposition from male teachers and orthodox sections of society. In 1892, she went to the United Kingdom and returned to India after qualifying as LRCP (Edinburgh), LRCP

(Glasgow) and GFPS (Dublin). In 1893, she was appointed as the first Indian (Bengali) woman doctor at the Lady Dufferin Hospital in Calcutta. After working for a short time at the Lady Dufferin Hospital, she started her own private medical practice. (Karlekar, 1986)

Women like Bidhumukhi Basu, Virginia Mitter and B.B. Bose, three another pioneering lady doctors were who became graduates from Calcutta Medical College in 1890. Later Bidhumukhi Basu became a social worker and Virginia Mitter discontinued her medical practice because of the patriarchal dominance in the society of the time. Dr. B.B. Bose practiced privately. By 1895, another 34 women had graduated from Calcutta Medical College and 21 of them were employed in Dufferin Hospitals in different parts of India. (Bhadra, 2011)

In 19th-century Bengal, Indian female medical students were admitted to two distinct programs of Western medicine. One was the Medical College in Calcutta, which awarded a medical degree. Entry required a B.A. degree, and the other was an institution like the Campbell Medical School, which offered medical education in the given vernacular language, requiring only an entrance examination. In 1894, Dr. Haimabati Sen obtained a Vernacular Licentiate Degree (VLMS) in Medicine and Surgery and was appointed as a "lady doctor" at 'Hughli Dufferin Hospital for women'. The female graduates of the Campbell Medical School were less well-suited to the colonial medical system than the graduates of the medical colleges, for two main reasons: first, inadequate training, because they were partly trained and second is, because they were taught and practiced in the vernacular. Campbell's instructors were Indians who received their medical training in India. Textbooks were written either in Bengali or were translations of English books. (Lal, 1994) In the absence of strong institutional support for the delivery of Western medicine, they often became dependent on traditional medical practitioners and remedies. As a result, female doctors at Campbell Medical School adopted a hybrid form of medical practice, blending Western and traditional methods. Another notable figure, Jamini Sen, came from an educated Brahmo family. She was the daughter of Chandicharan Sen, a sub-judge, and the sister of the poet Kamini Roy. Jamini Sen enrolled in the Calcutta Medical College (CMC) in 1890 and, in 1912, earned the Diploma from the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons, Glasgow. By 1895, CMC had produced thirty-four female graduates, the majority of whom hailed from Christian families.

Conclusion

The presentation above highlights how gender-based patriarchal structures influenced the expansion of women's education and their inclusion in the medical field during colonial Bengal. Both the educated elite and colonial rulers recognized the importance of women's education as essential for the development of an ideal society. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, British imperialism, coupled with colonial responsibility, intertwined more closely with Western hegemony as awareness of women's health was raised and Western medicine became accessible to women in urban centers.

Social reformers who championed women's education were largely successful, particularly among middle-class women. However, their success stemmed from not advocating for radical change, but rather reinforcing traditional views of women's domestic roles. They reassured families that their daughters would be safeguarded and would better fulfil these roles after receiving modern education.

While many women moved beyond domestic roles to engage in politics, they continued to conform to socially assigned notions of femininity and were accepted by the male-dominated society. However, the expansion of medical education for women underscores the larger issue of women's rights to better health and employment, which is intrinsically linked to broader social development. This movement also exposed the racial discrimination of colonial policies and the pervasive sexism in society. By challenging patriarchal control and the subordination of women, it laid the groundwork for advocating for greater and more equitable opportunities for women in healthcare.

References and Work Cited

1. Adam, W. (1836). *Report on the State of Education in Bengal.* Rajshahi.
2. Bandyopadhyay, S. (2004). *From Plassey to Partition– A History of Modern India.* New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd.
3. Bhadra, M. (2011, January - June). Indian Women in Medicine: An Enquiry Since 1880. *Indian Anthropologist* ,, 17-43.
4. Burton, A. (1996, July). Contesting the Zenana: The Mission to Make "Lady Doctors for India," 1874-1885. *Journal of British Studies*, 368-397. Retrieved from https: / / www.jstor.org / stable / 175919
5. Forbes, G. (2008). *The New Cambridge History of Indis iv.2 Women in Modern India.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

6. Jex-Blake, S. (1886). *Medical Women: A Thesis and its History.* London.
7. Karlekar, M. (1986, April 26). Kadambini and the Bhadralok: Early Debates over Women's Education in Bengal. . *Economic and Political Weekly*, WS25–WS31. Retrieved from http: / / www.jstor.org / stable / 4375594
8. Lal, M. (1994, March). The Politics of Gender and Medicine in Colonial India: The Countess of Dufferin's Fund, 1885-1888. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 68.
9. Meredith, B. (1984). *The Changing Role of Women In Bengal, 1849-1905.* Princeton University Press.
10. Nair, J. (1990). Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings, 1813-1940. *Journal of Women's History 2*, 88-134.
11. Naono, A. (2012). Educating Lady Doctors in Colonial. In P. Bala, & P. Bala (Ed.), *Contesting Colonial Authority Medicine and Indigenous Responses in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century India.* Lexington Books.
12. Ray, B., & Basu, A. (Eds.). (1999). *From Independence Towards Freedom: Indian Women since 1947.* New Delhi: Oxford University press.
13. Saxena, K. (1994, October - December). *The Indian Journal of Political Science, 55*, 391-400. Retrieved from https: / / www.jstor.org / stable / 41855710
14. Sen, K. (2004). Lessons in Self-Fashioning: "Bamabodhini Patrika" and the Education Of Women in Colonial Bengal. *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 176-191.
15. Southard, B. (1993, May). Colonial Politics and Women's Rights: Woman Suffrage Campaigns in Bengal, British India in the 1920s. *Modern Asian Studies, 27*, 397-439 .

42

Women's Empowerment through the SHGs- A Step forward to Rural Development in India

Gargi Sengupta

Abstract

Rural Development aims at finding ways to improve rural lives with participation of rural people themselves so as to meet the required need of rural community. Some important ways of Rural Development are economic development, social development, infrastructure development, human resource development, institutional development, environmental conservation and removal of gender disparity. Women constitute 48% of the total rural population of India. But they are denied access to social and economic decision- making in the family and community as in India poverty in general and extreme poverty in particular has a significant gender dimension. ShGs as a fruit of micro finance system is a way of alleviating poverty in India in the personal domestic level as well as social level also. The two major yardsticks of rural development are Poverty Alleviation and Women Empowerment both of which can be solved by the initiation of SHGs in India. Inspired by international models, NGOs like SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) and MYRADA (Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency) started experimenting with SHGs. NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) initiated SHG-Bank Linkage programme in 1992. Indian Government launched Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) IN 1999, incorporating SHGs. At present, SHG movement in India has come a long way empowering millions of rural women and contribution as a strong tool of Rural Development in India.

Keywords: *Rural Development, Gender Dimension, Poverty Alleviation, Women Empowerment, Self -Help Groups*

Introduction:

Women empowerment is always considered as one of the key aspects of social development throughout the world. "Empowerment of women is not only imperative but also crucial for all round development of society and the nation as a whole."**1** In India, the advancement and empowerment of women has become a leading objective of state policy ever since the attainment of independence in 1947. Women comprise of half of the country's population, yet they have limited control over income. Empowerment of women involves many things- economic opportunity, social equality and personal rights. As women play a significant role in the growth and development of the family as well as society at large, empowering women is the key to economic growth, political stability and social transformation, essential for sustainable development. It is one of the main agendas in the developmental targets of most of the nations that could be achieved with the collective efforts of women who are marginalized. In India, the population already crosses one billion and nearly one third of its population living under below poverty line. In India, even though the share of women population is equivalent to that of male, the entrepreneurial world is still a male dominated one.

Concept of Women Empowerment:

Empowerment can be viewed as means of creating a social environment in which one can make decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. Though the term had become a buzzword in the sixties, it became popular extensively in the eighties. It is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or a group to make their own choices and encourage in such a way as to transform those choices into defined actions and outcomes. Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all sphere of life. "The term empowerment refers to range of activities from individual self-assertion to collective resistance, protest and mobilization that challenge basic power relations."**2** It is this process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they define as important. Empowerment occurs within sociological, phycological and economic spheres and at various levels such as individual, group and community. Empowerment as a process enhances the ability of disadvantaged and powerless individuals or groups to challenge in their favour,

existing power relationship that places them in subordinate economic, social and political positions. Women empowerment can be considered as equal status to women, opportunity and freedom to develop herself. It has their origin in their subordinate position in patriarchy and associated ill treatments and non- recognition to their contributions. Women's empowerment and promoting women's rights have emerged as a part of a major global movement and is continuing to break new ground in recent years." Women empowerment is any process that provides greater autonomy to women through the sharing of relevant information and provision of control over factors affecting their performance."**3**As a matter of fact, empowerment of women is the process by which women become aware of gender- based unequal power relationships and acquire a greater voice in which to speak out against the inequality found in the home, workplace and the community. It is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally unprivileged ones in the society. "It means recognizing women's contribution, women's knowledge; It means helping women fight their own fears, and feeling of inadequacy and inferiority; It means women enhancing their self -respect and self- dignity; It means women controlling their own bodies; it means women economically independent and self-reliant; It means women controlling resources like land and property;It means reducing women's burden of work, especially within the home; It means creating and strengthening women's groups and organizations, It means promoting equalities of nurturing, caring, gentleness not just in women but also in men."**4** So women empowerment can be defined to promoting women's sense of self-worth, their ability to deter mind their own choices and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. The types of women empowerment are social, educational, economic and political empowerment.

Concept of Rural Development:

The term rural signifies any population, housing or any specific territory which is not situated in urban area. Rural area usually means the villages. Rural Development refers as a method of improving and increasing the quality of life and financial well-being of such individuals who lives in a village area. "Rural development is a comprehensive term. It essentially focuses on action for the development of areas outside the mainstream urban economic system."**(5)** Rural development can be considered as a method of bringing change among

rural community from the tradition way of living to progressive one. This comprehensive approach "encompasses economic, social, environmental and physical aspects and works to expand economic opportunities and improve access to services such as health care and education. Rural development initiatives also strive to support sustainable agriculture and land use, protect natural habitats and foster community level development."**(6)** The term rural development can be designated as a subset of the broader term development. So,"rural development implies overall development of rural areas with a view to improve quality of life of rural people."**(7)** The strategy of rural development aims at uplifting the socio-economic conditions of the rural people, the base of which are rural poor and women.

From Indian perspective, rural development has never been a new concept. It had acquired immense significance and was interwoven in the heritage of our country. The second most populous country of the world has staggering number of villages. It is 649, 481 in the 2011 census of India. The 2011 census also reported that about 68.84% of India's population or approximately 833 million people live in rural areas. "India has been a welfare state since independence and government policies and programmes were designed with the aim of alleviation of rural poverty."**(8)** Ancient India had a rich tradition of rural development with a focus of Participation, sustainable living, social harmony and community driven growth. There were the concept of Gram Swaraj, (village self government), Krishi (Sustainable agriculture), Jal Sanakshan (water management) Dharma (Social Welfare), vrikshayurveda (Environmental Conservation) Gramodyog (Rural Industries)and Sarvodaya (community participation). "In October 1974 the Department of Rural Development came into existence as a part of Ministry of Food and Agriculture."**(9)** Mahatma Gandhi's key principles of Rural Development was Swadeshi, Gram Swaraj, Sarvodaya and Antyodaya through village Industries, Khadi and village Textiles, Agricultural Reforms, Cooperative Movement, Basic Education, Health and Sanitation. He emphasized on the "development of other village industries like hand grinding hand pounding, soap-making, paper making, match-making, tanning and oil pressing."**(10)** Post independent and modern Rural Development initiatives have gathered inspiration from Gandhian approach of Rural Development recent times "Rural Development is the current rage among planning experts and policy makers as a solution to the problem of poverty in developingcountries.**(11)** So, rural development is getting

noticeable importance all over the country today than that in the older days. Amarty Sen has contributed significantly to the concept of Rural Development. His work focuses on capability Approach, Human Development participatory governance, Sustainable Livelihoods and Social justice. He emphasized on Investing in Human Capital, Enhancing Productive Assets, Promoting Social Services, Fostering Entrepreneurship along with Empowering Local Communities. Thus "Rural Development has always an important issue in all discussions pertaining to economic development, especially of developing countries, throughout the world."**(12)** So, Rural Development can be defined "as systematic approach aiming at total development of the area and the people by bringing about the necessaryinstitutional attitudinal changes and by a package of services with an ultimate objective of improving quality of life in the rural area".**(13)**

Concept of SHGs:

Self-help groups (SGHS) are informal, voluntary associations of individuals sharing common interests, goals or experiences, typically 10-12 members, aiming to improve their social, economic or emotional well-being. "Generally, a Self Help Group (SHG) is formed when members of a community, who have the same or similar problem, come together, meet share experiences, have discussions and there by arrive at solutions. As an ethos, a SHG symbolizes community initiatives to tide a problem over and achieve a level of self-sufficiency."**(14)** SHGs are acting as a major tool for livelihood development of rural women. In villages all over the world, millions of people still rely on traditional livelihood such as agriculture, forestry and fishing. These occupations are often characterized by low productivity along with limited opportunities for growth, "Livelihood development is a critical aspect of economic and social progress, as it plays a key role in reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development. India is a country of diverse cultures, languages and socio economic backgrounds, making the development of livelihood an important and complex task."**(15)** The core meaning of Self Help Groups is "One should help one self," So, SHGS grew out of the developmental experiences of the various stakeholders concerned in the process, the beneficiaries, banks and the government. So to say, "a Self Help Group is a socially and economically homogenous group of 12-20 poor people voluntarily coming together to achieve common goals."**(16)** The concept of SHGS is based on the idea of community participation. It is necessary for sustainable community development

which requires active and spontaneous participation of the entire community, viewing from this perspective, the planners and policy makers of Indian administration have formulated and implemented enabling policies for poverty alleviation. The focus also fixed to development activities of locally rooted, participatory micro development organizations. SHGs start with savings and not with credit the group then uses its savings to give loans to members to meet their emergency and other needs. The interest rates on the loans are market driven. The members decide on savings per member, maximum size of loans, guarantee mechanisms in loan sanction. They prioritize loan applications on the basis of need. The groups enjoy institutional autonomy and necessary flexibility to operate their business. Regular meetings are conducted in which savings are collected, loans are lent, recoveries affected and group decisions taken. All the transactions are recorded in their account books. The self-help groups offer an easy and cost-effective way of depositing these small savings. SHGs open a savings bank account with a nearby bank branch to deposit surplus cash if any.

In India, up to the empowerment of backward class rural women through Self Help Groups has been recognized internationally as a modern innovation of poverty alleviation which is one of the main yard sticks of rural development. The origin of Self Help Groups (SHGS) is the brainchild of Grameen Bank of Bangladesh which was founded by Mohammed Yunus. SHGS were started in 1975. In India NABARD is initiated in 1986-87, but the effort was taken originally after 1991-92 from the linkage of SHGs with the banks. In India, up to three decades of independence credit delivery network faced a perceptible gap in financing the genuine needs of the poor, especially in rural areas, The high transaction costs in providing small loans, perceived high risk and low credit of poor borrowers act as deterrents ... Under such circumstances an informal arrangement for credit supply to the poor through the forum of Self Help Groups (SHGS) is fast emerging as a promising tool for promoting income generating enterprises. This movement was actually started with the objective of getting relief from the debt of the lender SHGS was chosen as the best option for this very purpose.

Women's Empowerment through SHGS: A Landmark of Rural Development

Development is no doubt a universally cherished goal of every

individual every community and every nation all over the world. "Development is a key dimension of personal life, social relations, politics, economics and culture...." **(17)** Women's participation in developmental process is a must for the overall development of a particular country. Like all other countries of the world, In India also it is crucial for inclusive and sustainable growth. The status of women in independent India occupies a very significant role in uplifting her own self and at the same time the society at large. Women's participation in decision making processes and development initiatives that impact their lives and communities is one of the basic yardsticks of rural development It's about creating opportunities for women to contribute their perspectives, skills and experiences to achieve sustain able development and gender equality which is also an inevitable element of rural development.....

"For the development of women, different plans and programmes were formulated and implemented." **(18)** For nation of Self Help Groups is one of the important means of bringing them to the fore front of the society through which rural development can reached to its ultimate goal . Through SHG these Women come together and share their own experience of conflict and struggle, strength and weakness and help each other to identify individual and collective strategies for empowerment. Through involving in SHG movement, a woman can take part in financial decision making of her own life and in house hold. And enhance her self-confidence along with leadership capacity which enables them to be empowered in the economic and social sphere. It helps them to fight agaist poverty and inequality.

"Since rural development is intended to reduce poverty and inequality, it requires positive change in the rural areas...." **(19)**. Rural women in India , most of the time, denied access to social and economic decision making in the family and community, in spite of being major contributors to family's economy and management which is the main impalement to Rural Development. After independence Indian Govt. first took the initiatives to eradicate poverty. Development thinking and policy in the post-independence period were designed to rectify the damage they had inflected on the Colonies**.** There has been a long history of discussion on the women's participation in rural development. There are WID & WAD approaches regarding women's participation in Development procedure. The women in development (WID) approach focus on integrating women into development process

core principles of this approach is equality, women's empowerment, participation and inclusion, addressing gender-based disparities. The examples of WID approach model are VNDP's Gender and Development (GAD) frame work,world Bank's Gender Action plan, USAID's gender equality and female Empowerment policy etc. The women and Development (WAD) approach emerge as a response to the neglect of women's issues in development policies. Core principles of this approach are recognition of women's contributions to development, integration of women into development processes, addressing women's practical needs and empowerment through Self Help groups and organizations. There is no denying the fact that Rural Development is an absolute and urgent necessity in India now and will continue to be so in future. Poverty alleviation is one of the major yardsticks for the development of rural community. "Poverty is a situation in which a section of the community is unable to acquire or get even the basic necessities of life."**(20)** It is self-help groups which aim to reduce poverty by providing income generating activities, financial Services and access to livelihood opportunities. They have proven to be an effective mechanism for poverty alleviation. They have provided access to finance, build livelihood opportunities and fostered social inclusion. SHG implementation can provide opportunities for the rural poor women of India to engage themselves in various types of self-employment activities. It can be said that SHGs are critical instrument for lifting people out of poverty and improving social standing by encouraging self-employment. The Self Help group (SHG) approach is such a parading in the field of rural development of India with main objective to increase the economic conditions of the poor people by providing access to credit resources, increase self-confidence, self-esteem and increase their credibility in all aspects of lives. The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY NRLM) is a flagship programme that aims to reduce poverty by enabling poor rural woman to access gainful self-employment thus self- help groups (SHGS) of the poor, particularly women, have enabled themselves to access a range of financial services and livelihoods. Under DAYNRLM livelihoods. 39 Laks SHGS get loan of Rs. 1.12 lakh crore in the financial year 2023-24.

Women are not only becoming an agent of the poverty alleviation mission through their engagement with SHGs but also being empowered with the help of SHG movement. As Self Help is groups are structures which enable people's participation to achieve self-

management, self-reliance and sustainability. SHGs provide woman entrepreneurs with micro-loans to sustain their businesses while also creating environment for them to develop greater agency and decision making skills. In real sense, empowerment would be attained when women are actively involved in the larger struggle for social change. SHGS can be considered as one of the most significant tools in participatory approach for the economic empowerment of women. The very concept of development "may be explained as an ongoing process of adjustment to the ever changing situation to improve the quality of life…", **(21)** The SHGS formation is one of such efforts which can fulfill the above mentioned criterian of development of a country as gender equality and empowerment of women is accepted universally as an important aspects of development. In India even though women enjoy equal constitutional and legal status with men, they are still Victim of multiple, socio-economic and cultural factors. Empowerment through SHGS would lead to benefits not only to the individual women and women groups but also to the family and community as a whole through collective action in the process of development, Again, Rural Development "is a process of social action in which people of a community organize themselves for planning and action…."**(22)** For this viewpoint SHG movement is such a plan of action which makes the dream of Rural Development fulfilled by empowering the half of India's 1.39 billion populations. "There are 78,32,327 SHGS in India with 8,50,07,507 members." **(23)** These huge number of SHGS play a very crucial role in women's empowerment since they enable women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to form social capital SHGS also play a critical role in providing impoverished people with access to finance, which is essential for poverty reduction. From both the two points i.e. women empowerment and poverty alleviation SHGS are most effective tools in rural development.

Rural Development thus means a strategy designed to improve the lives of people in a rural setting. It is an absolute necessity in India now and will continue to be so in future. Self Help group movement is a silent revolution to uplift the poor people across the globe. Empowerment is such a process which involves individuals or group of individuals to realize their powers and identity in all spheres of life. SHGS help to improve the quality of life of individuals by self-reliance, upgrading their skills and developing sustainability in the SHGS group member's income. In India "The village is not only a

physical unity but also a social and ritual unity." In Indian context, it is the *sine qua non* of the overall development in India. The SHGS movement; has attempted to analyze rural women's freedom of mobility, Community and family recognition, general awareness, work skills, individual and family income, interaction skills, participation in developmental programs and involvement in decision making. Self Help groups Movement is no doubt a key strategy to accomplish the various goals of sustainable development Goals (SDGS) as their most important function is to encourage the members to save their earning persuade them to make a collective plan for generating additional income and to act as a conduit for formal banking services to reach them. "Rural Development and Rural welfare are possible only with local initiative and local direction.... It must be an instrument of expression of local people's will taking in view the local development." **(24)** SHGS are such a platform of collective leadership and mutual dialogue in India that it fosters community cohesion and shared responsibility.

Since independence, rural development has, for obvious reasons, been the central pillar of national development drive." In this respect also, SHGS has a pivotal role at present because besides their role in financial activities, SHGS have also ventured into community policies in many areas of India. A sound number of SHGs of India "have taken part in the implementation of various welfare and development Programmes of the Government and are increasingly addressing various social issues." **(25)** This auxiliary role emphasizes the multi-dimensional unity of SHGS in modern India.

Conclusion: Empowerment of women is one of the main criteria of rural development. Successful agenda for the empowerment of the rural women requires the dismantling of values, structures and processes that maintain women's subordination. Involvement in SHGs is a way which is freeing the women of rural areas from such stereotypes and making themselves an important agent of rural development in India.

References:

1. Mandal, Keshab Chandra.2010.*Empowerment of Womwn and Panchayati Raj: experiences from West Bengal*. Sarat Publications. P-31
2. Sharma, Kumud. 1991-92. *Grassroot organizations and women's Empowerment: Some Issues in the Contemporary Debate in* Samya Shakti. Centre for Women's Development Studies. New Delhi.p-29

3. Sayulu, k, Sardar, G andSeidevi, B,.:Impact of Self -Help Groups on Women Empowerment : An Empirical Study".*ManagementResearcher.*XL No.3 & 4. January-June, 2005, P-22

4 Bhasin, Kamala. 1998." Why Empowering Women" in Sahay Susma(ed).*Wmen and Empowerment:m Approaches and Strategies.* New Delhi, Discoveryublishing House, P-11

5 Pandit, Anirudh, (2020). *Rural Development: Indian Perspective.* Xpress Publishing. Chennai. P-1

6 Santanu Kumar Parta, Ashis Anand and Soumya Sakti Dash in Rural Development in India in Behera, Rajeeb Ku (ed) *Rural Development in India.* (2023).Notion Press. P- 35

7 Mazumder and Bhattacharjee. (2022). *An introduction to Rural Development.* ABS Publishing House. Kolkata. P-1.

8 Kiran Prasad in women and Rural Development: An overview of Policies and practice in Prasad. Kiran(ed) *Women in Rural Development: Contemporary Social Policy and Practice*. (2006). The women press. New Delhi. P-4

9 Ibid, P-5

10 Bandyopadhyaya, Jayantanuja. (2014). *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi.* Progressive publishers. Kolkata. P-243

.11 Danda, Ajit K. (ed). (1984). *Studies on Rural Development.* Inter - India Publication. New Delhi. P-25

12. Bhattacharya, Seema. (2011). *Rural Women, Panchayatraj and Development.* Mohit Publications. New Delhi, P- 216

13. Rahaman, Khalilur. (2012). *Women Empowerment Through Decentralized Governance.* Mitram. Kolkata. P-73

14. Bhandari, Ramesh. (2009). *Role and Status of Women in New Panchayati Raj System: Decentralization and Development.* Alfa Publication. New Delhi. P- 1

15. Behera, Rajeeb Ku(ed). (2023). *Rural Development in India: A Comprehensive Overview.* Notion Press. P- 35

16. Pandit, Anirudh, (2020). *Rural Development : Indian Perspective.* Xpress Publishing. Chennai. P-46

17. Haynes. Jeffery. *Development Studies.(*2015). Rawat Publication. P-187

18. Sen, Pujan Kumar. (2012). *Indian Society : Continuity and change.* PEARSON. p- 80

19. Dhingra, I.C.(1986). *Rural Economics.*Sultan Chand and Sons. p-15

20 Desai, S.S.M. (1986).*Fundamentals of Rural Economics*. Himalaya Publishing House. P- 120.

21. Das Rajat Kanti Basu Arabinda and Guho Abhijit (ed).(2006) *Perspective of Rural Development : Problems a;nd prospects.* Creative Data Centre. P-3

22. Sreedhar, G. and Raja Sekhar, D.(2014) *Rural Development in India: Strategies and Processes.* Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi. P- 39

23.. Kumari, Kiran in his article SHG play a big Role in Economic Empowerment of women in *Journal of women Empowerment and Studies*, vol -4, No,-04, June – July 2024 (http: / / journal . hmjournals. Com / index.Php / JWES)

24.. Report of the Team for the study of Community projects and National Extension Service, Vol. I. Government of India. New Delhi. 1957. P-6

25. Reddy, K. Raja and Reddy,(2012) C.S. *Self Help Groups in India.: A Study on Quality and Sustain ability.* ENABLE Publication. P-59

43

Women Empowerment and Digitization: Bridging the Gender Divide

Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar

Abstract

Women's empowerment plays a crucial role in the overall development of any society besides positively impacting the daily lives of women. The winds of radical change in the fields of employment and information technology have brought with them a wide range of opportunities for women in India and across the globe. The primary objective of this study is to find the usage of digitization in rural regions and urban regions by women. Digitization, which is the primary focus of digital literacy, is the most essential skill required for the empowerment of women. The development of mobile technology has brought the world to one's fingertips and has allowed women to update themselves about everyday national and global news. Education not only enables rural women in digitization but also helps them to empower themselves economically.

Key words *: Empowerment, Development, Opportunities, Digitization, Mobile Technology*

"We've heard a lot about the Internet of Things – I think we need an Internet of Women." – Christine Lagarde, IMF Managing Director

A Prelude

It goes without saying that new technologies and innovations are reshaping our world and its future, often at a dizzying pace. Yet women and girls continue to be left behind in this burgeoning digital universe. From social media and e-commerce to artificial intelligence, technology is transforming how we work, communicate and live our lives. Yet as technology races ahead, women and girls – especially those from developing countries and vulnerable communities in Asia and the Pacific – continue to be left behind. Unconscious gender bias

in the design and development of new digital products and services is further perpetuating gender inequality. While we celebrate digital's transformative power, we also recognize the need to address the barriers that stand in the way.

Digital Gender Divide

The digital gender divide refers to gender differences in resources and capabilities to effectively utilise ICT, which amount to gender gaps in the access and use of digital technologies, digital skills, and digital finance (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018). These gaps widen on account of non-technological barriers such as inadequate economic resources, lack of training, and socio-cultural norms about women's roles and place in society. Gender gaps in digital inclusion consequently spill over into gender inequalities in the labour and financial markets, which further put women at a disadvantage. Moreover, even as young women attend educational institutions, they do not enter (or are not allowed to enter) the labour force once they reach the marriageable age , which might indicate either the non – availability of adequate opportunities or the greater involvement of women in household work , or adherence to social and cultural norms .

Women and girls in all their diversity are limited in their ability to use mobile technology and the Internet for a variety of reasons, all of which are grounded in persistent global gender inequality. The main barriers to adoption fall into four broad areas:

Affordability. Women are often less financially independent and have lower income levels than men, due to social norms and other factors. The Alliance for Affordable Internet estimates that 900 million people live in countries with internet prices higher than the International Telecommunication Union's internet affordability benchmark (1 GB mobile data for 2 percent or less of monthly income). For women, the situation is even more dire. This is particularly problematic for women at the last-mile or in low-resource communities, as they lack the means to pay for devices, exorbitant fees, taxes, or pricing plans. These women must instead spend their money on essentials to meet the basic needs of their families.

Availability. In rural, low-income areas, network coverage is usually lower, placing an additional burden on low-income women and girls in all their diversity. Obtaining devices, especially smartphones, is often more difficult for them in these communities,

which forces many women to use older feature phones that do not support mobile internet use. This prevents women from benefiting from the transformational features and functions these more sophisticated technologies provide.

Ability. Women worldwide often acquire lower levels of technical and digital literacy skills, report a lack of confidence in using technology, and lack access to relevant content for women's needs, especially in local languages. These factors limit their use of mobile and internet platforms.

Appropriateness. Safety, security, and harassment concerns further discourage women from using technology. These concerns include fear of harassment from strangers (in the form of unsolicited calls, unsolicited texts, unsolicited online messages, or cyberbullying), as risks related to online data security and privacy. Women also tend to report lower levels of understanding of the Internet's potential and a perceived lack of value.

Ways in which digitization is empowering women.

1. Harnessing technology to support women entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs play a key role in developing economies. Supporting them to start and grow businesses through technology will lead to more sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Women have historically struggled to access capital because they are less aware of funding options. They are less likely to own land or have large savings to offer as collateral and have not been included in traditional financial networks.

Technological innovations provide an opportunity to connect women entrepreneurs across the region with new financing models that cater to their particular needs. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship project has unlocked almost USD 65 million in capital to support women entrepreneurs in several countries. Through identifying and backing a number of experimental technology-driven business models, the project has supported women-led micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) through a range of technology solutions such as payment platforms, online marketplaces, bookkeeping, and inventory management.

2. Rural education

To seek real change we must build from the bottom up. In an enlightening case study conducted by Bridgewater called Impact of Digitization on Women's Empowerment: A Study of Rural and Urban Regions in India, the authors make a compelling case for how mobile technology "has brought the world to [womens'] fingertips" which in turn allows them to stay ahead of current affairs and encourages financial independence by facilitating online transactions. These are trends we must collectively as a society encourage. Something as simple as teaching your domestic helpers to use a smartphone can go a long way in empowering them and their families.

3. Having a voice

Digital media has encouraged women to speak up and discuss issues that are crucial to their very survival. This has brought topics such as sexual harassment, domestic violence, female sexuality and the gender divide front and centre instead of hidden away behind closed doors with largely men deciding the narrative.

With digital becoming the primary mode of communication including in the business world, women can more readily balance the demands of motherhood and their jobs from the privacy of their homes. Imagine the amount of brain equity we are reclaiming as a globe in the process.

The best practices for any development sector — women's digital development or otherwise — are based on an understanding of the end-user in the most holistic sense possible. Technologies need to be appropriate for all the constraints that women face, be it literacy, cost, safety, security, or relevance. More than that, technology needs to fit a woman's lifestyle.

4. Ensuring Food security

Inclusive access to digital technologies and education is crucial to reducing gender inequalities and empowering rural women and girls. This was the message three United Nations' Agencies, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), announced on the occasion of their joint event marking International Women's Day 2023 on the 8th March. Digitalisation on its own cannot solve all the gender-related disadvantages women face. But if provided with equal access to digital technology and

education, women could have a more active and effective role in our agrifood systems.

"Food security for households and communities is in the hands of the women. It is only through women's empowerment that we can build a world where no one goes to sleep hungry," said WFP's Deputy Executive Director, Valerie Guarnieri. Transfer of knowledge and skills including digital literacy could help these women realise their full potential.The FAO has launched various initiatives to promote digital technologies which also specifically support women. Examples include the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture, the E-Agriculture Community of Practice and the 1,000 Digital Village Initiative. The Global Network on Digital Agriculture and Innovation Hubs aims to support its members to foster innovation within their digital agriculture ecosystem, with a special focus on women and young agripreneurs.

By assisting women with digital and financial literacy trainings and working with community champions, WFP aims to help them to open their own banking, mobile money or other digital accounts, bringing economic benefits including food security to these women and, in turn, to their families and communities.

Building Digital Tools with Women, for Women

Digital technologies can empower women, but when they are not designed around women's experiences and needs, they risk "growing different divides and exacerbating different challenges."2 Excluding women in the design and implementation of DPI has many downsides, including replicating or integrating biases and offering digital products that ultimately are ineffective for women. When women are excluded from designing and developing digital tools, biases may unintentionally be introduced into the system. The analysts that train these language models might overrepresent certain demographic characteristics over others (e.g., white men under 40) and thus inadvertently skew the programming away from women. When programs make decisions based on these AI models—from credit limits to healthcare and employment decisions—women might miss out, even in an advanced country such as the United States. As an example, in 2019, Apple's digital credit card assigned different credit limits to women and men regardless of limited differences in salary, debt, and credit scores. In one case, one man's line of credit was approximately 20 times larger than his wife's, and customer service

employees were unable to explain the AI-generated decision. Another example comes from Thailand, where the national digital ID system has led to some trafficking survivors being excluded from financial institutions because their data include a history involving human trafficking.

In addition, women need to feel confident and safe in the digital world so that they can realize the benefits and mitigate the risks of digitization. This implies that digital infrastructure must be built in such a way that women's privacy and data are protected.

In addition, women should be better equipped with digital literacy, ranging from basic skills, such as knowing how to use hardware, software, and the internet, to more advanced skills in ICT professions, such as computer programming and network management. Many jobs related to innovations such as AI, big data, natural-language processing, cybersecurity, the Internet of Things (IoT), software development, and digital entrepreneurship require advanced digital skills. However, only 22 percent of AI and data science professionals are women. As discussed, this underrepresentation may affect the type of digital services provided to women.

Government Initiatives towards Digitization

The Government has taken various steps to ensure empowerment of women and girls through their educational, social, economic and political uplifting through various schematic interventions.One such initiative is 'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)' under Digital India programme. It aims to bridge the digital divide specially targeting rural population including the marginalised sections of society, women and girls by covering 6 crore rural households. As on 08.12.2022, the percentage of women benefited under PMGDISHA is over 53% of total enrolled, over 54% of total trained and over 56% of total certified.

In addition, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education is administering 'National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology' (NMEICT) Scheme, SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), SWAYAM PRABHA, National Digital Library (NDL), Virtual Lab, e-Yantra, NEAT (National Education Alliance for Technology) etc. to ensure quality education through e-learning to students across the country.

Ministry of Women and Child Development has taken a number of initiatives to empower women through the schemes and programmes implemented in the country. The Ministry has formulated 'Mission Shakti', an Integrated Women Empowerment Programme, as Umbrella Scheme for the Safety, Security and Empowerment of Women for implementation during the 15th Finance Commission period.

Our belief

We , therefore, believe that as the digital landscape continues to evolve, the global world has a unique opportunity to empower women in this space. By taking concrete steps to address the gender digital divide, equip women entrepreneurs, and foster secure digital environments, the world can catalyze change on a global scale. However, the full benefits of digitization cannot be achieved without a coordinated strategy to include women throughout the design and implementation processes. Women must have a seat at the table In the digital transformation journey so that they can shape their economic destinies.

References

1. Aker, J., R. Boumnijel, A. McClelland, and N. Tierney (2013). How Do Electronic Transfers Compare? Evidence from a Mobile Money Cash Transfer Experiment in Niger. Tufts University Working Paper.
2. Beena, Ms, and Madhu Mathur. (2012). Role of ict education for women empowerment." International Journal of Economics and Research 3.3: 164-172.
3. Carah N, & Dobson A (2016) Algorithmic hotness: young women's"promotion" and "reconnaissance" work via social media body images. Soc Media Soc, 2(4).
4. Cummings, C. and Tam O'Neil. (2015). Do digital information and communications technologies increase the voice and influence of women and girls. A rapid review of the evidence. Overseas Development Institute.
5. Keeley, Brian, and Céline Little. The State of the Worlds Children 2017: Children in a Digital World. UNICEF. 3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, 2017.
6. Maier, S., & Nair-Reichert, U. (2007). Empowering Women Through ICT-Based Business
7. Initiatives: Best Practices in E-Commerce / E-Retailing Projects overview. Information Technologies and International Development, Special Issue on Women's Empowerment and the Information Society, 4(2), 43-60.

8. Malhotra, R. (2015). Empowering Women through Digital Technology: An Indian prospective. International Journal of Business Management.
9. Nath, V. (2001). Empowerment and governance through information and communication technologies: women's perspective. The International Information & Library Review 33.4 317-339.
10. Notermans, Catrien. "Prayers of cow dung: Women sculpturing fertile environments in rural Rajasthan (India)." Religions 10.2 (2019): 71.
11. Rajahonka, M. and Kaija V. (2019). Women managers and entrepreneurs and digitalization: on the verge of a new era or a nervous breakdown? Technology Innovation Management Review
12. Women, Connected. "The mobile gender gap report 2018." GSMA, London Retrieved from https: / / www. Gsmaintelligence. Com / research (2019).
13. Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar, "Naribaad , Lingo Rajniti o Narir Khomotayan ,Avenel Press, 2019
14. Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar, Sanchita Jana, Biswajit Pal , "Nari o Amader Somaj : Akti Bikkha" , Avenel Press , 2023
15. Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar, Sanchita Jana, "Poschimi Naribad ebong Nari Troyee : Alexandra Kollontai , Mary Wollstonecraft ebong Simone De Beauvoir" , Avenel Press, 2024
16. Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar, Naribad, Marxio Naribad o Alexandra Kollontai, (2024), Arambagh Bookhouse
17. Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar, Rajnoitik Somajtottwo, Nobodoy Publications, 2016
18. Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar, Sanchita Jana, Biswajit Pal, Nari o Amader Somaj : Ekti Jibon Dorpon , 2023

44

A Study on Child Sexual Abuse and Law in India (POCSO)

Fahaduddin

Abstract

The paper discusses that India has a law called Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act (POCSO) which deals with child sexual abuse. It emphasizes India's progress as well as its impact on child rights, disadvantage and conflict. The 2012 POCSO Act states that rape of a child below the age of twelve is punishable by death; Nevertheless, problems with precise age determinations, reporting procedures and strict compliance requirements still exist. Additionally, the debate surrounding the law is examined in the paper. Emphasizing the gender neutrality of POCSO Act 2012, the study aims to explore a gap in the scholarly literature on POCSO reforms and its impact on socio-legal culture and institutions, perspectives and experiences of key stakeholders through a qualitative approach. This non-theoretical research study examines the effectiveness of POCSO laws on child sexual abuse in India. It uses secondary sources like newspapers, journals and the internet and aims to assess the role of law in solving such cases. The POCSO Act of 2012 aims to provide access to justice for sexually abused children in India, but many are denied access due to ignorance, procedural issues or delays in prosecution. The Child Welfare Committee should manage the process by ensuring legal assistance and proper public support. Despite the recognition of the law, child abuse remains a significant problem in India, requiring a comprehensive approach involving government agencies, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, academics, civil society organizations and the media. Addressing cultural perceptions, gender inequality, and inadequate support networks is critical to a secure future. Research on legal change and enforcement should prioritize the welfare of sexually abused children. India should adopt child-friendly policies and improve the administration of criminal justice.

Keywords: *Child, Child Sexual Abuse, POCSO Act, Crime, Punishment.*

Introduction

The most valuable resource of society is a child, which is also essential for the growth of the country. They are the future of the nation. Nurturing and nurturing a nation's youth determines its potential. Sexual abuse of children is one of the biggest problems in India. To deal with this problem and protect the rights of children, a special law known as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act (POCSO) was passed.This Act has undoubtedly been a significant step in protecting the rights of children. As of January 2, 2016, 39% of India's 1.29 billion people are children. Article 15 of the Constitution protects the rights of children by implementing specific laws and policies to protect their interests. The concept of justice has existed for ages and is essential to society. Justice is defined and decided by law, which protects and governs all people while treating them equally. Children's rights must be protected. Since they are considered dependent, children are subjected to abuse from the state, society and family. Along with other international human rights treaties, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) highlights the importance of access to justice. Advocacy, child-friendly information, child-sensitive procedures, and access to independent complaints processes are emphasized by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Both the Fundamental Rights of the Indian Constitution and the State Policy Guidelines refer to the right of children to fair trial. But thousands of children in India are abused, exploited and victims of violence; They are also denied access to social services, healthcare and education. Article 15(3) of the Constitution of India empowers to make special provisions for children especially in cases of sexual offenses, to ensure equal justice.The article highlights India's high prevalence of child abuse, particularly sexual abuse and trafficking. A study in Kerala found that 36% of boys and 35% of girls had been sexually assaulted. According to the government survey 50%, the highest incidence occurred in Uttar Pradesh.

Research area

The focus is limited to India as it relates to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, 2012. The POCSO Act in particular has been thoroughly examined by the researcher.

Significance of research

India is among the top five countries with the highest rates of child sexual abuse and the number of cases is increasing rapidly. Before

the POCSO Act came into force in 2012, the Criminal Code was insufficient to protect children from sexual exploitation, necessitating the creation of a new law.

Method of Research

This research study uses secondary sources and is completely non-doctrinal. The research uses secondary data sources, such as newspapers, journals, internet and case study analysis, which involves observation of significant cases.

Research questions

Problem identification is the first step in any problem solving and discussion. The fundamental question in this study relates to whether the Indian criminal law is adequate to deal with cases of child sexual abuse after the enactment of this law.

Objective of the research

1. To study the impact of the POCSO Act after its passage and implementation.
2. To assess the role of POCSO Act in addressing cases of child sexual abuse.

Literature review

In particular, the researcher examined several national and international criminal law regulations regarding child sexual abuse norms and precedents. Among other national and international regulations related to her subject of study, the researcher examined the Indian Penal Code, POCSO Act, UNICEF Report on Child Sexual Abuse and others.

POCSO Act of 2012: Protection of Children from Sexual Offences

The POCSO Act has several significant provisions, some of which are listed here.

1. police officer must report any child abuse or related cases to the Child Welfare Committee within 24 hours upon receipt.
2. Police officers handling a case must wear civilian clothes while recording the child's statement to avoid reprimanding the child.
3. The child's statement regarding the crime must be recorded in the presence of the person they believe.

4. The child's medical examination should be conducted only with a trusted female doctor for the purpose of collecting forensic evidence.
5. The Act establishes Special Courts for expedited trials.
6. The court is obligated to maintain confidentiality about the identity of the child, and the accused's 7.child's identity should not be disclosed during the recording of the statement.The child is allowed to provide their testimony through video without repeatedly repeating it.
8. The family is required to compensate for the child's treatment and rehabilitation.
9. In court, if a child requires assistance, an interpreter, translator, special educator, or other specialist must be present.
10. The case is resolved within a year of its reporting date.

Punishments

Section 4 of the Act allows for a maximum punishment of 7 years for penetrative sexual assault, which can also result in 5 years imprisonment and a fine.

Section 6 of the act stipulates a minimum punishment of 10 years for aggravated penetrative sexual assault, which can also result in life imprisonment and a fine.

Section 21 of the Act stipulates that failure to report an offense results in a six-month punishment and a fine.

Section 18 of the act stipulates a one-year punishment and fine for attempted offenses.

Section 10 outlines punishment for aggravated non-penetrative sexual assault by trust and authority individuals, ranging from 5 years to 7 years, and includes a fine.

Section 10 of the law allows for a maximum punishment of 3 years for non-penetrative sexual assault with sexual intent, which can extend to 5 years and a fine.

CHALLENGES AND CONTROVERSIES

The POCSO Act, 2012, though child-friendly, has some issues that contribute to challenges and controversies despite efforts to address child sexual abuse.

Physical, psychological, social, economic and legal factors influence child sexual abuse. Despite being child-friendly, the POCSO Act of 2012 has some flaws that cause problems and controversies.

1. Medical examination - Section 166A of the Indian Penal Code requires immediate examination of rape victims, while the POCSO Act requires examination of female doctors and female children.
2. Consent to medical examination - The POCSO Act does not have any guidelines on who refuses medical examination, so some aspects need to be clarified. But to save the child's life, treatment must be started now.
3. consensual sex - The POCSO Act recommends consensual sex between consenting children but prohibits sexual contact between minors and adults. The current age of consent under the Indian Penal Code is 18.
4. child marriage - In India, child marriage is prohibited under secular law but permitted by personal law, which makes the POCSO Act, 2012 more difficult to enforce as it makes marrying and having children illegal.
5. Medical expenses - Although the POCSO Act requires medical facilities to provide free medical care to children, inadequate facilities or costly procedures may prevent them from receiving thorough treatment.
6. Reporting issues - It is true that most cases of child abuse are not properly reported because of fear of humiliation, embarrassment and shame in front of the whole society. For family members, reporting child abuse is a very personal and difficult decision. They usually avoid the torture of fear, insults, taunts which result in the case not being reported.
7. Training problems - Because of the personal and challenging decision making, family members often delay reporting child abuse situations for fear of disrespect and humiliation.

Also, there are other significant issues under this Act that must be properly handled and addressed, such as study, observation, child education, concept of educating a child about good and bad touch, illiteracy and lack of knowledge of parents.

Conclusion

The POCSO Act of 2012 seeks to promote and provide access to justice for child victims of sexual abuse. Nevertheless, thousands of children continue to be denied access due to ignorance, procedural problems, or judicial delays. The Child Welfare Committee should conduct the process by helping the victims and their parents bring the perpetrators to justice and ensuring legal aid, although the POCSO Rules, 2020 do not clearly outline the issues to be assessed. In order to expedite justice for child victims, proper public understanding of the role of the authorities and services provided under the Act is essential.

The recognition of sexual harassment by the POCSO Act, 2012 has led to a dramatic reduction in child abuse in India. However, there are still problems, such as providing counseling and psychological support to victims. Since child abuse is one of the most under-reported crimes in India, society needs to take a comprehensive approach to it. Children should get fair treatment from doctors.

In India, child sexual harassment is a serious problem that threatens the development and safety of youth. Despite support programs, awareness efforts and legislation, the problem still exists. To prevent, intervene and help victims, a multi-pronged strategy involving government agencies, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, academics, civil society organizations and the media is required. Addressing underlying factors such as cultural perceptions, gender disparities and inadequate support networks is essential. A secure future can be achieved through cooperation and putting the rights and welfare of the child first.

The welfare of sexually abused children should be the primary focus of research on legal change and stricter enforcement. The government should improve the administration of criminal justice and adopt child-friendly policies from other countries. Although the POCSO Act 2019 has been amended to reduce the crime rate, inadequate implementation has led to an increase in the crime rate. Alternative prohibitions have been suggested as a result of the need to eradicate sex crimes. Despite victims suffering more than criminals, India continues to use the death penalty.

References

1. 2012 (India).Joined Countries Show on the Privileges of the Kid, Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3.
2. The Insurance of Kids from Sexual Offenses Act, No. 32 of 2012, Demonstrations of Parliament, 2012
3. (India). KailashSatyarthi Kids' Establishment, Status of POCSO Cases in India 9 (2021).
4. The Security of Youngsters from Sexual Offenses (Correction) Act, No. 25 of 2019, Demonstrations of Parliament, 2019 (India). Public Wrongdoing Records Agency, Wrongdoing in India (2011)
5. Service of Ladies and Kid Advancement, India Youngster Misuse Report 1 (2007).
6. Mahesh Langa, Low conviction rate under POCSO Act: MP 53%, Rajasthan 36%, Bhopal 18%,· Hindustan Times (Aug. 9, 2020).
7. Journal on the Rights of the Child, https: / / www.unicef.org / french / adolescence / files / Every_Childs_Right_to_be_Heard.pdf, Accessed on February 10, 2018
8. Research Paper Analysis of Indian Legal Position on Child Sexual Abuse, https: / / knallp.com / files / 3.pdf, Accessed on 2018 February 10, 2018
9. Reviewing India s Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act three years on, http: / / blogs.lse.ac.uk / southasia / 2015 / 12 / 18 / reviewing-indias-protection-of-children-from-sexual-offences-act-three-years-on, Accessed on February 12, 2018

45

Women in India: Tidings and History of The Northeastern Indian Women

B. Lalrempuia

Abstract

Women in Northeastern India are having more freedom of opinion and a better status of living, due to its contribution of certain tribal habits mixed with Aryan culture. One of the remarkable tribalaspect is non-existence of Dowry system which is playing a horrific, degradable role in the proper developmental pattern of girl child and in gender equality. Northeast India is having both matrilineal and patriarchal societies, where man and woman enjoy almost equal status. Like the other states, the Northeast region was predominantly agricultural economy based, only recently, there is a shift in occupational patterns. The women folk, in spite of being in home basedengagement, enjoy participatory say in household matters or decision making. The girls are allowed to have their own choice and marry, whereas in the Khasi and Garo community, the girls marry off the grooms who right after marriage, have to shift to the bride's house and the girls enjoy ancestral property rights. Thus, the Northeast people were usually discriminated which can also be notified from the usage of remarkable terms like "Chinki and Chinese" to the common badmouthing revolving around women in Northeast. Besides, it is quite hypocritical that in the past as a nation when they remain aloof and indifferent to the way the citizens from the region have been treated and one could as well as go to the extent of saying that they have failed them in many multiple occasions. Living in a country as diverse as India, it is high time that as citizens, begin standing up to discrimination of people from the Northeast as they would witness it and condemn the perpetrator's right at their act. It is also high time that they take racial discrimination in India seriously before it starts penetrating into the minds of the young generations, who would otherwise grow up regarding folks from the Northeast states in lower light.

Keywords: *Northeast, Tribal, Remarkable, Women, equality*

INTRODUCTION

North East India is a region which always remained aloof from rest of the country due to the marginalization of the region from the 'mainland' India. When the whole country was celebrating women empowerment and women's right because of the various women's movement, no one looked at the heroic women's movement of the North East. Northeast India has also seen strong women's movement raising their voices against injustice or violence against women and bringing change in the society. This type of women's empowerment was found in Assam, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland. Thus, we have some of the strongest and must know women's movements that challenged the patriarchy and raised voice against social injustice or gender bias. Women in Northeast India face a variety of challenges, including;

1. **Traditional practices**: While women in the northeast may appear to have a higher status than women in other parts of India, they are still subject to discrimination from traditional and customary practices.
2. **Healthcare:** A survey found that 98% of women in the region face health issues, and the region lags behind the rest of the country in healthcare.
3. **Social, economic and political oppression**: Women in India face gender prejudices and bias in many areas of life.

However, women in the northeast are also making progress in a number of areas by increasing participating in modern politics, including in elections, public gatherings and political campaigns. The National Commission for women has also established a Northeast cell to address the challenges faced by women in the region. Hence, there are many inspiring women from the Northeast including award-winning women, a taekwondo black belt champion, a badminton player, an archer and a good dancer.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN NORTHEAST INDIA

Political role of women: *All along the ancient period women contributed in the administration of the kingdom. It has been found that in 33 A.D there existed a women's court in Manipur called 'Patcha' where women related problems were taken and settled. Two women's movement namely Nisha-Bandh and MeiraPaibi are examples of women's keen participation in controlling social evils in the society. Due to the rise in the sale of liquor and the menace*

created by the drunkard husbands to their wives, the NISHA-BANDH movement emerged in the 1970's.

In 1980, a sudden collective act called MeiraPaibis emerges immediately to shield the youth from atrocities by the security forces like arrest without issue of any warrant, killing or beating them up for nameless reason. The usual conflict situation in the state has resulted in the killing of numerous innocent people, the case of rape, molestation, abduction, extortion is so high that women sense the need to bring an end to such a kind of human rights violations.

Economic Role of Women: *The contribution of women in the economic facet is so large whether in the organized or unorganized sector they have been making their existence felt everywhere. There are many women who are holding high ranking posts as Indian Foreign Service, Indian Police Service, and judges in civil courts and pilots. A generous number of women are working as doctor, professor, architect, film producer, journalist, air-hostess, and teacher making a difference not only in the valley itself but also outside the state and abroad.*

Role of women In the Family: *The head of the family is the male who plays the authorities role. Women are not traditionally entitled to the succession of the family. Sometimes the husband may go for second for third wife too if in the family no male child is born. The role of married women is limited to the maintenance of house, cooking, brewing liquor, working in agricultural fields. The unmarried girls help their mother in the house and feels alike and take care of the minor ones. In the Hill Miri society, the wives have very decisive effect regarding their position is as though the wives.*

Violence: *Violence against women is a explanation of the historically unequal power relation between men and women, which have led to dominance over and inequity against women by men. Although both men and women face violence, an astounding majority of victims of sexual assault and domestic violence are women. Assam is the second state in the country with the highest account on crimes against women. Domestic Violence, Kidnappings, rape and other crimes which fall under sec 498 of IPC are being female literacy rate.*

Educational aspects of women: *In the range of education, women in Assam are in a improved position than all the Indian average. The educational fulfillment of women in Assam can be interpreted through female literacy rate and female enrolment rate at various stages of education. According to census 2011, it highlighted in encouraging lift from 54.61 percent in 2001 to 67.27 in 2011, showing a sharp climb of about 31 percent in female literacy rate.*

GENDER REALATIONSHIP IN THE SOCIETY

Gender is a constitutive element in all social relations. The term 'gender' refers to the social classification of men and women as masculine and feminine and their expected behavior based on their assigned social roles. The different roles that are ascribed to men and women are socially and culturally determined and influenced by traditional practices, institutions, customs and beliefs. Most of the societies in the northeast India are patriarchal society where men dominate and exercise control over most of the resources and are considered superior to women.

Traditional genders roles have a great influence on gender relationship in the society. Almost all the tribes in the region have their history of warfare and headhunting. In such situations ensuring peace and security to the people was an important duty on the part of the youth. Hence the institution of bachelor's dormitory played an important role as the training center for the youth. Even though maintaining security was its main concerns, the bachelor's dormitory was also concerned for the welfare of the village community. It was also an institution in which the young men learned technique of war, fighting, wrestling, traditions, etiquette, religion and all the essential things for their lives. Women and girls were not allowed to enter such dormitories. Most of the tribes in the northeast deny young women with such training facilities. They were rather obliged to look after the welfare of the family as most of the domestic affairs and the household maintenance fall upon the. Today, even though such institutional practices have been done away, yet the attitude towards women, to quote Temsula as benevolent subordination continues.

From the early age children of this region learn what it means to be a boy or a girl. Girls are socialized early into the household chores. They are taught to cook, fetch water, wash dishes, clean the house, looked after their younger siblings while their mother are away in the fields. Meanwhile boys are taught maintenance chores such as looking after the fields, cutting firewood etc. Girls are expected to remain at home and look after the family where they are made to think that domestic activities and nurturing are women's work while boys are made to work outside thereby depicting the 'gender-stereotypical role'. The process of gender socialization continues throughout the life cycle. When a girl grows up and become a married woman, managing the household is her responsibility. For instance, though a women might be just returning from the field it is expected that prepares food and do the needed household chores. Men showed their masculinity by not interfering in any of the household chores. As have been mentioned by Lalrinchhani, that, though a man might be near the cooking place where his wife has cook something and even if the vessels overflows, he would just watch and call his wife who is busy in some other

chores to attend it. Man considered doing household chores as a shameful thing as they don't want themselves to be address as 'henpecked husband' by their fellow men, this negative attitude of men underlines the patriarchal notion of men.

WOMEN OF NORTHEASTERN REGION FACING HEALTHCARE CHALLENGES

The Northeastern Region (NER) of India, with its unique geography, diverse terrain, and rich sociocultural fabric, is making strides in socio-economic development of the country. However, a deepseated healthcare crisis continues to afflict the region, with both communicable and noncommunicable diseases (NCD's) affecting the day to day lives of the people

The health challenges faced by women in NER encompass a spectrum of issues, including but not limited to maternal health, malnutrition, and infectious diseases, ignorance, limited access to healthcare facilities in remote areas amplifies these concerns, leading to a higher prevalence of health disparities. In women healthcare, NER is weaker than any other state of the country. The factors responsible for poor rural healthcare services are as follows;

Menstrual health Issues

Menstrual health among women is intricately tied to a complex interplay of cultural, social, and economic factors. Fortunately, various initiatives and awareness campaigns have been implemented to tackle these issues. These efforts aim not only to break silence surrounding menstruation but also to empower women with accurate information and access to essential hygiene conducted to dispel myths and foster a more supportive environment for women's menstrual health.

HIV and other infectious diseases

Northeastern states of India have higher number of HIV cases than any other part of the country. According to the NACO report, Manipur has more than 25,000 registered people living with HIV and their children whether affected or not usually avoid getting tested for AIDS, for the fear of social ostracism. One of the major reasons for the increase in the cases of AIDS is drugs.

Mizoram shares two international borders, one with Myanmar, the golden triangle in the east and Bangladesh in the west, a haven for drug traffickers or smugglers, who often use infected syringes leading to its fast spread, affecting both men and women equally. According to the NACO Mizoram has acquired the dubious distinction

of becoming one of the leading states that registered an average of 5 to 6 positive cases in a day. Manipur and Nagaland are not too far behind in the race.

Cancer

According to the IMCR reports, the probability of developing cancer over a lifetime is as high as 1 in every 4 males and 1 in every 6 females in Assam. Among women, breast cancer was found leading with 14.5 percent followed by cervix uterus 14.2 percent. According to cancer incidence DAR for 2012-2016, the highest incidence of cancer in women in India was in the Northeastern region, with Aizawl and Kamrup leading the cancer incidence rates.

Other Conditions

Maternal health remains a significant concern, with inadequate antenatal care and unskilled birthing assistance contributing to heightened risks during pregnancy and childbirth. Cultural norms and societal taboos surrounding menstruation continue to influence women's experiences in the region. These norms can contribute to a lack of open dialogue about menstrual health, leading to misinformation and stigma. Infectious diseases, such as malaria and waterborne illnesses pose additional threats to the well-being of women in the region. The economic disparities also play a role, many women have to struggle to afford sanitary products, leading to improvised solutions that may compromise hygiene. Efforts to address these issues involve a multi-faceted approach, combining improved healthcare infrastructure, community health education, and targeted interventions for maternal and child health. Collaborative initiatives between governmental organizations are essential to alleviate the agonies faced by these women.

Challenges and the way Forward

The healthcare challenges faced by women in Northeast India are deeply intertwined with the overall development and healthcare infrastructure of the region. Limited CSR funds spent, coupled with challenges such as lack of awareness, infrastructure deficits, and difficulties in project implementation, exacerbate the healthcare crisis.

The agonizing healthcare challenges faced by women in Northeast India demand immediate attention and concerted efforts from both the public and private sectors. The region's unique socio-cultural fabric, coupled with the burden of diseases and inadequate healthcare

infrastructure, necessitates a comprehensive approach. Increased CSR funds spent in focused manner, awareness campaigns, and strategic healthcare access, and alleviate the suffering of the Northeastern population. Only though collaborative efforts can be the region overcome its healthcare challenges and pave the way for a healthier and more prosperous future.

THE STRUGGLE AND FIGHTS FOR WOMEN'S RIGHT IN NORTHEAST INDIA

1. Nupilan (1904 and 1939-40), Manipur: NupiLan/lalwhich means women's war in Manipur had first started in 1904 against the British order in Manipur. The heirs apparent of the former ruling family were not happy with the selection of Chura Chand Singh as the king by the British so they started up the first NupiLan. Later, the main agenda of NupiLan was to raise voice against British order of the Lalup (a form of forced labor where the male members of the society within the age group of 17-60 would work freely for 10 days in the period of every day) systems to rebuild the then police agent's bungalow after it was destroyed by fire. The women protested against this since the male members had to suffer, the women had to face various socioeconomical obstacles. Almost 5,000 women participated in the movement lasted for a week. The British later suppressed the movement, but had to withdraw the order later.

NupiLan phase two took place between 1939-40. It was against the trade policy of Manipur set by the king and the British. The trade policy was about exporting rice from Manipur without looking at its limited production which is only sufficient for Manipur's subsistence, this policy led to a famine and economic crunch in Manipur. Women of Manipur collectivized themselves in the market and protested against it. When the authorities tried to suppress the by deploying police and armed men against the unarmed women, they fought vehemently against them and even some of them lost their lives. The second phase lasted for several months but came to an end with the outbreak of World War II.

2. Mizo Women's Movement under MHIP (Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl): Recently, the Mizo women's movement inched closer to their victory when the state Law Commission was in final process of reviewing the Mizo Marriage Bill 2013, the Mizo Inheritance Bill 2013 and the Mizo Divorce Bill 2013. This was the result of long struggles of MizoHmeichheInsuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), which is a

women's organization under Pi Sangkhumi (former president of MHIP). MHIP under the leadership had been demanding for changes in Mizo Marriage Laws, especially they wanted abolition of Mizo Bride Price in Mizo marriages. They said "If old age customs like childmarriages, purdah, etc. can be illegal now then why not the bride price in Mizoram can be declared illegal? They also fight violence against women, discrimination in workplaces and campaign for 33% women's reservation in the political system among others. Actually, Mizo Women fight for their rights.

3. Naga Mother's Association (NMA) Nagaland: Naga Mother's Association is presently a women's peace-making organization. It was established in 1984. The most evident movement taken up by NMA was "Shed No More blood" (which is also their theme) movement which was against gendered violence and human rights violation by campaigns prohibiting drug abuse and alcoholism. They also train to maintain peace and prohibit by nurturing and sustaining ceasefire between Nagaland underground groups and government along with MeiraPAibi, they demand the government to withdraw AFSPA and maintain peace and tranquility in their state and stop armed forces to kill innocent villagers in the name of terrorists.

4. AsomMahilaSamiti, Assam: The women's movement in Assam is as old as the freedom struggle in this zone. The Asom Mahila Samiti was established in 1926 under ChandraprabhaSaikiani. Under this organization, there were various movement against violence against women, women's low literacy, gender discrimination wages and workplaces and encouraging women's self-esteem in the society I general. They also conduct peace campaigns and have raised their voice against women's invisibility in the society and challenged the patriarchy inherent in it. Later this organization broke into various smaller groups with Tezpur district MahilaSamiti as the major constituent of it. The Assam MahilaSamataSamiti has done exemplary work in creating awareness on witch hunting.

CONCLUSION

Like the rest of the world, Northeast India is also constant recurrence of women's movement. Here, women's movements are not only redefining gender stereotypes through their interventions but also tried transforming definitions of democracy, nationalism and peace. They always believed that military regulations are not solutions to peace-rather it is about dialogue and political negotiations with all

these heroic movement, Northeast also makes its space in the arenas of women's movement which must be acknowledged from all over India. The status of women in India has been subject to many changes over the span of recorded Indian history. The states of Northeast India have always experienced some or the other kinds of discrimination as compared to the rest of the Indian. The women of Northeast India play a crucial role in various domains of life, from being workforce, to land cultivators and producers, house makers, running small scale businesses and so on. Still the respect, autonomy, freedom, and value of women are a grey area and very questionable. Government policies and shift in patriarchal trends give some hope for a better future of women in the state of Northeast.

REFERENCE

*https://www.google.com/search?q=women+ in+northeast +india&oq=women+in+ northeast&gs_*

lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqBwg AEAAYg AQyBwg AEAAYgAQyBgg BEEUYOT IICAIQABg WGB4yCAgDEAAY FhgeMgg IBBAAGBY YHjIICAUQA

https://www.nehu.ac.in/public/assets/files/journals/ JournalJuly_DecArt5111213.pdfhttps://margheritacollege.in/online_portal/ attendence/classnotes/files/1695827674.pdfhttps://ijcrt.org/papers/ IJCRT2007565.pdfhttps://www.jstor.org/stable/42748384https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/development-peacebuilding-andwomen-s-agency-in-northeast-indiahttps://www.advancingnortheast.in/ inspiring-womenof-north-east/

46

Economic Empowerment : Women's Voices and Challenges

Susama Middya

Introduction

Women empowerment and women's economic empowerment are closely related,in one direction, economic empowerment and development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women; in the other direction, empowering women may benefit from women economic empowerment and development.

International Women's Day is commemorated on March 8th of each year. This day celebrates women's power and serves as a reminder of the important role women play in all aspects of human life. However, women have been disadvantaged as a community, and they have been fighting for equal women's rights for a long time. "Women empowerment" is the only way to improve women's status in society.Women and girls may be able to take charge of their sexual and reproductive health through economic empowerment.In addition to having autonomy over their time, bodies, and lives, women's economic empowerment includes their capacity to find decent jobs, control productive resources, and engage in markets. It also entails giving women a stronger voice and allowing them to actively participate in economic decisions at all levels, from national and international organizations to households.

One of the most important goals our society is attempting to achieve today is the empowerment of women. To give women a shot at equal and equitable chances, a number of projects and activities are planned. But there are various aspects to women's empowerment. In

this paper, we concentrate on women's economic empowerment and try to work out how to best support it.

Women empowerment and women's economic empowerment

The improvement of women's self-worth, their autonomy in making decisions, and their right to impact societal change for both themselves and others is known as women's empowerment. Empowering a woman inspires a whole generation, but it is true that empowering a man empowers an individual.

Women's economic empowerment gives them the opportunity to participate in important economic choices, control their time and money, and have suitable job options, allowing them to be an equal part of current markets.The practice of giving people or communities more control over their financial situation so they may make better decisions and live better lives is known as economic empowerment. It entails giving underprivileged or marginalized people access to the tools, chances, and abilities required for financial success. Access to education and training, financial services like credit and savings accounts, encouragement for entrepreneurship, job opportunities, and fair involvement in economic decision-making are just a few examples of the many ways that this empowerment can manifest. People can escape cycles of poverty, discrimination, and dependency and actively participate in economic growth and development by gaining economic empowerment.

Economic empowerment is essential for women because it helps people and communities to break the cycle of poverty, prejudice, and dependence. It promotes self-sufficiency, expands opportunities, and encourages inclusive development, all of which lead to enhanced well-being and quality of life.By giving women equal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making authority, economic empowerment can promote greater gender equality. It can reduce poverty, enhance health and educational results, dispel gender stereotypes and rules, and encourage social and political engagement.

Women's economic empowerment and Human rights

Women's economic empowerment is fundamentally linked to human rights. while discriminatory social norms limit women's access to information, networks, jobs, and possessions. Globally,women have only 64% of the legal rights that men do. Adoption of laws and policies that support women's economic empowerment, as well as the repeal

of discriminatory laws and legal frameworks, are critical tactics for promoting women's rights in the context of economic empowerment.

Recognizing the fundamental worth of women's economic empowerment, which is based on human rights, is crucial, but so is taking into consideration the significant costs that societies and economies bear when women's economic empowerment is restricted. Human rights violations must be held accountable, and women human rights advocates must be supported and protected. This calls for gathering sex-specific statistics, recording violations of women's rights, and forming alliances for cooperative advocacy initiatives. In order to safeguard women's rights and guarantee that their voices are heard in all decision-making settings, accountability procedures must be created and put into place.

Facilities of women's economic empowerment

1. In order to achieve gender equality and women's rights, women must be economically empowered. Ensuring that women have equal access to markets, decent work, social protection, and control over their own time, bodies, and resources, as well as a stronger voice, and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels—from the home to international organizations—are all components of women's economic empowerment.
2. Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals [1] requires advancing w r eromen's economic justice and rights in the economy and reducing gender disparities in the workplace.
3. Economies expand when more women are employed. Economic diversification and income equality are increased for shared prosperity when women are empowered economically.
4. Women's economic empowerment and more inclusive, ecologically sustainable economic growth are facilitated by raising the educational attainment of women and girls. The health and well-being of women and girls, as well as their ability to generate income and engage in the formal labor market, depend heavily on education, upskilling, and reskilling, particularly to keep up with the swift technological changes that are impacting jobs.

5. Business benefits from women's economic equality. Increasing women's employment and leadership possibilities benefits businesses tremendously and has been demonstrated to boost organizational performance and growth. According to estimates, businesses with three or more women in top management positions perform better across the board.

Economic empowerment and Barriers

Everyone is impacted by women's economic empowerment; it is not only a "women's issue." Research shows that economic growth and poverty reduction rates decline when women are left out of low-income nations' formal sectors. After more than half a century of promoting women's economic empowerment globally, these four significant obstacles that –

Familial Barriers

Compared to men, women have a higher unemployment rate.Both employed and jobless women worldwide shoulder disproportionately significant household responsibilities. Domestic labor and unpaid caregiving—tasks vital to the economy's operation—are disproportionately performed by women worldwide. According to estimates, women's unpaid domestic work would account for between 10 and 39 percent of the GDP if it were valued monetarily.Laws that limit women's employment options outside the home and societal norms contribute to this unequal division in domestic duties.

Lack of ability to obtain resources

Access to productive resources like land, money, and information is much less common for women than for men worldwide. For example: In low-income nations, 74% of men and only 68% of women have access to a formal bank account. The projected wage disparity between men and women worldwide is roughly 23%. Since women only make up 12.8% of agricultural landowners globally, most of them do not have access to this crucial economic resource.

Gender based Violence

Human Rights Watch reports that millions of female employees worldwide endure a variety of unwanted sexual behaviors in intimidating, confrontational, or degrading work settings. Despite being a common and relatively well-known problem, many women are afraid to report sexual harassment at work for fear of professional or social retaliation, civil or criminal consequences or backlash, losing

their immigration status, or being disbelieved or held responsible for their own experiences. Another factor that limits women's economic options and contributes to gendered employment segregation is the fear of encountering gender-based violence in the workplace.

Social Barrier

Discrimination based on gender is a persistent obstacle to women's economic emancipation. Strongly held opinions on what women should and shouldn't do can be found in a variety of settings, including their homes, neighborhoods, and places of employment. Restrictive social standards can have an impact on all facets of women's lives. Women's experiences in the workplace are directly impacted by gender-based discrimination and restrictive social standards, which also restrict their access to good jobs. For example, it is estimated that gender-based harassment at work costs the world economy $12 trillion annually. Certain occupations or those requiring them to interact with men are expressly forbidden to women in several developing nations. 2.7 billion women around the world are denied the same job options as males.

Due to these constrictive social standards, women are frequently forced into low-paying, precarious, and informal jobs. These socially enforced limitations are sometimes codified. Out of the 184 economies examined, 104 had rules that specifically prohibited women from working in particular roles as of 2018, and 59 had no legislation at all regarding workplace violence or sexual harassment.

Indian women frequently find it difficult to overcome their families' rejection of their outside-the-home employment.

There are five challenges that will increase women's economic empowerment

1. Resources: Increase efficiency

Women can start or expand businesses and meet their fundamental requirements by connecting with financial resources, but $1.7 trillion of micro, small, and medium-sized female-owned firms lack enough funding. By 2030, the average yearly income of women-owned small and medium-sized businesses would climb by 12% if the credit gap were closed.

Women also require access to natural resources, information, technology, and land. Internet access, which is essential for landing a job or launching a business, was still unavailable to 2.7 billion people in 2022. In 87% of the nations where data is available, women are less

likely than males to own or have secure rights for agricultural land, even though over one-third of working women work in the agricultural sector. In order to create a society that benefits them, women can invest in themselves by enhancing their wellbeing, obtaining education, launching a business, or exercising agency over their income when they are granted equal rights to access, possess, and use resources.

Women's economic empowerment, for instance, frequently lowers gender-based violence, boosts political and social engagement and leadership, and lowers the chance of disaster.

2. Jobs Are Required

Women are more able to express their agency and recognize their rights when they succeed in the workplace, but any job won't do. In addition to being productive, work must be done in an environment of liberty, equity, safety, and respect.Workplace gender equality can be achieved by implementing policies like pay transparency, equal compensation for equal effort, and access to care services. Successful female entrepreneurs have the ability to spur innovation and create jobs.

3. Time frame: Striking balances between work and life

One of the main causes of inequality is the gendered differences in unpaid care work, which limits the time and possibilities available to women and girls for education, respectable paid employment, public life, relaxation, and enjoyment.

Everybody needs caring at some point in their lives. In addition to reflecting significant status and power disparities, the current societal structure of care frequently takes advantage of the labor of women and girls. Compared to males, women typically devote three times as much time to unpaid caregiving and household chores. 1

Caregiving is still underestimated and paid poorly. Globally, women provide unpaid care worth at least $10.8 trillion a year, which is three times the size of the global tech sector.

Participating in care system transformation has three benefits: it gives women back their time, creates jobs in the care industry, and expands access to care services for people in need. Nearly 300 million jobs are predicted to be created by 2035 if current gaps in care services are filled and decent work initiatives are expanded.

4. Security

Food hunger, conflict, gender-based violence, and a lack of social protection are just a few of the many risks to women's security. Women's rights are violated and their ability to participate in the economy is hampered by domestic or workplace violence.The study indicates that gender-responsive social protection programs, such as cash transfers, can lower women's death rates, highlighting the connections between security and economic empowerment. Insecurity, in whatever form, keeps women from achieving their full potential and rights, keeps them in poverty, and impedes their economic empowerment. It is essential to fight social conventions that regard women as less valuable than males as economic agents and to bring together a variety of stakeholders, including those in the business sector.

5. Protection of rights

The core concept of women's economic empowerment is human rights.Recognizing the fundamental value of women's economic empowerment, which is based on human rights, is crucial, but so is taking into consideration the significant costs that societies and economies bear when women's economic empowerment is restricted. Human rights violations must be held accountable, and women human rights advocates must be supported and protected. This calls for gathering sex-specific statistics, recording violations of women's rights, and forming alliances for cooperative advocacy initiatives. In order to safeguard women's rights and guarantee that their voices are heard in all decision-making settings, accountability procedures must be created and put into place.

Conclusion

These discussions lead to the conclusion that women's economic empowerment is essential in developing countries such as India because education helps women stay relevant in all spheres of life and prepares them to deal with organizational problems, which reduces gender-based violence and helps to improve economic empowerment.

Present day, We are living in an age where women are empowered.Where women's development, economic empowerment, and empowerment are given careful consideration.However, women's empowerment and economic empowerment will only be feasible if gender equality is achieved, security and women's excess mortality is

minimized.Only when women are economically empowered will they be able to achieve actual empowerment.

In closing, women's economic empowerment is not just a question of personal rights; it is also a driving force behind the accomplishment of more general social, political, and economic objectives pertaining to sustainable development and gender equality.

References

Das, M, and Sonalde Desai,2003, "Why Are Educated Women Less Likely to Be Employed in India?Testing Competing Hypotheses". Social Protection Discussion Paper Series..

Kabeer, Naila, and Luisa Natali. 2013. "Gender Equality and Economic Growth

Chowdhury, Subhanil,2011,"Employment in India : What Does the La Economaic & Political Weekly xlvi 23–26.

Sen, Amartya, 2009, Development as Freedom

CSO. 2011. "Selected Socio-Economic Statistics India, 2011". Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, New Delhi.

Luci, Angela. 2009. "Female Labour Market Participation and Economic Growth." International

Baliamoune-lutz, Mina. 2007. "Gender Inequality and Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa and Arab Countries."

Bhalotra, SR, and M Umaña-Aponte. 2012. "The Dynamics of Women's Labour Supply in Developing Countries." Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) Working Paper. Institute for the Study of Labor Working Paper.

Tam, Henry. 2011. "U-shaped Female Labor Participation with Economic empowerment: Some Panel Data Evidence." Economics Letters110 (February): 141–145.

Tansel, Aysit. 2002. "Economic Development and Female Labor Force Participation in Turkey

Abraham, Vinoj. 2009. "Employment Growth in Rural India: Distress Driven?" Economic & Political Weekly xliv 97–104.

Anker, Richard. 1997. "Theories of Occupational Segregation by Sex: An Overview." International Labour Review 136 .

World Economic Forum. 2021. Global Gender Gap Index Report 2021. p. 33. Cologny, Switzerland: World Economic Forum.

Mitra, Pritha, Eric M. Pondi Endengle, Malika Pant, and Luiz F. Almeida. 2020. "Does Child Marriage Matter for Growth?" IMF Working Paper 20 / 027, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC.

Attanasio, Orazio. 2005. "Female Labor Supply as Insurance Against Idiosyncratic Risk." Journal of the European Economic Association 3,750–762.

Htun, Mala, Francesca R. Jensenius, and Jami Nelson Nuñez. 2019. "Gender-Discriminatory Laws and Women's Economic Agency." Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society 26, 194–224.

Development finance for gender equality and women's empowerment. Available at: https: / / www.oecd.org / development / gender-development / development-finance-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment.htm#:~:text=In%202021%2D2022%2C

International Labour Organization (ILO), Care at work: Investing in care leave and services for a more gender equal world of work, 2022. Available at: https: / / www.ilo.org / wcmsp5 / groups / public / —dgreports / —dcomm / documents / publication / wcms

Gaddis, Isis, and Stephan Klasen. 2012. "Economic Development , Structural Change and Women ' s Labor Force Participation : A Re Examination of the Feminization U Hypothesis". Univerisity of Gottingen, Germany.

Goldin, C. 1994. "The U-shaped Female Labor Force Function in Economic Development and Economic History." In Investment in Women's Human Capital and Economic Development, ed. T Paul Schultz.

Oxfam International, Not all gaps are created equal: the true value of care work. Available at: https: / / www.oxfam.org / en / not-all-gaps-are-created-equal-true-value-care-work

International Labour Organization (ILO), Pay transparency legislation: Implications for employers' and workers' organizations (June, 2022).

FAO, The gender gap in land rights (Rome, 2018). Available at: https: / / www.fao.org / 3 / I8796EN / i8796en.pdf[18] FAO, The status of women in agrifood systems, Available here: https: / / www.fao.org / 3 /

International Labour Organization (ILO), World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2023. Availableat:https: / / www.ilo.org / wcmsp5 / groups / public / —dgreports / —inst / documents / publication / wcms_865332.pdf. And ILO Spotlight on Work Statistics n°12 (March,2023). Availableat:https: / / www.ilo.org / wcmsp5 / groups / public / —dgreports / —stat / documents / publication / wcms

International Labour Organization (ILO), Third edition Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture, 2018. Available at: https: / / www.ilo.org / wcmsp5 / groups / public / —dgreports / —dcomm / documents / publication / wcms_626831.pdf

World Bank, Women, Business and the Law 2023. (Washington, D.C., 2023). Available at: https: / / wbl.worldbank.org / en / wbl

UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment. Availableat:https: / / www.unwomen.org / en / digital-library / publications / 2018 / 01 /

International Monetary Fund (2018). Pursuing Women's Economic Empowerment. Availableat:https: / / www.imf.org / en / Publications / PolicyPapers / Issues / 2018 / 05 / 31 / pursuing-womens-economic-empowerment

Moody's Analytics, Close the Gender Gap to Unlock Productivity Gains, March 2023. Available at: https: / / www.moodysanalytics.com / - / media / article / 2023 / Close-the-Gender-Gap-to-Unlock-Productivity-Gains.

Cuberes, David, and Marc Teignier-Baqué, 2011, "Gender Equality and Economic Growth," Background Paper for the World Development Report 2012.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2011, The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–11: Women in Agriculture—Closing the Gender Gap for Development.

http: / / www.unfpa.org / gender / empowerment2.html